

SYMPATHY, ANTIPATHY, HOSTILITY.
BRITISH ATTITUDES TO NON-REPATRIABLE POLES
AND UKRAINIANS AFTER THE SECOND WORLD
WAR AND TO THE HUNGARIAN REFUGEES
OF 1956

by

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PART ONE :INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

In this thesis I wanted to consider the responses in Britain to refugees from Eastern Europe who arrived in Britain after 1945. This was a large subject, too vast to be covered sufficiently in a thesis of this size. As a result, I decided to narrow it down to three groups, the Poles and the Ukrainians who came to Britain as a result of the Second World War, and the Hungarians who arrived in 1956.

The Poles were chosen as an example of victims of change in an Allied country. During the Second World War Polish forces and administrators had arrived to help in the fight against Germany and thus free their homeland from the Fascist yoke. However, after the conclusion of hostilities it was decided by the three Powers, the Soviet Union, the United States and Great Britain, that Poland should fall under the Soviet sphere of influence. However, many of the Poles who had been displaced during the course of the war were unwilling to return to a Communist, Soviet-dominated Poland.

The Ukrainians also arrived in Britain as a result of the Second World War. Some of this group came as Displaced

Persons from Europe unwilling to return to a homeland under Russian control. For the nationalistic Ukrainians, it was not just that their land was under Soviet domination, but also that this regime was dictated to by Russian national interests, with little, if any, concessions being made to the interests of the many other nationalities of the Soviet Union. Other Ukrainians arrived as prisoners of war having fought with the Axis forces during the hostilities. These men were unwilling to return because of the likelihood that they would be executed as traitors once they came under the jurisdiction of the Soviet authorities.

The Hungarians who entered Britain in 1956 were also seeking refuge from a country subordinated to the Communist influence of the Soviet Union. Again, many feared reprisals for trying to break free from this situation. This group, which arrived at a later date than the Poles and Ukrainians, enables a comparison to be made between responses in 1945 and those in 1956 in order to discover if, and in what ways, reactions were different.

A fully detailed view of the reactions of both the British authorities and the general public was also a task too large for this thesis, therefore I decided that in addition to providing a national overview I would also

provide a case study of responses in Yorkshire. This exercise has been carried out by examining responses in two contrasting cities, Bradford and Sheffield. Bradford was chosen as a city traditionally attractive to immigrants, with an economy based on the textile industry. Sheffield was not known as an established receiver of immigrants and, up to 1956, was economically rooted in the steel and engineering industries, with a number of coalmining communities in its surrounding areas.

I hope to produce a representative survey of responses to post-war East Europeans in Britain, concentrating particularly on Yorkshire. It should be stressed that the major sources which are used in this research, in other words newspapers and the interview transcripts of the Bradford Heritage Recording Unit, often provide only partial information. Themes sometimes appear and then disappear. This is inevitable in view of the nature of the evidence. Nevertheless, through the deployment of such material it is possible for the first time to provide a full account of the Poles, Ukrainians, and Hungarians, who came to Britain after the Second World War, concentrating particularly on settlement patterns and responses in the North of England. This theme, concentrating on the North of England, has previously remained unexplored. It should be emphasized, finally,

that no attempt has been made to investigate and incorporate the official documents stored in the Public Record Office. That project would be a thesis in itself.

The coverage of the resettlement of East European groups in Britain, in both the media and official sources, diminishes with time and consequently this thesis concentrates on the period 1945-1961 for which evidence is more accessible. However, marginal references are made to dates outside this period when relevant. In particular, with reference to the Ukrainians in Britain there is a short examination of how they were affected by the War Crimes debate in the 1980s.

2. EVENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE

Before making any consideration of the responses to post-war East European refugees it is necessary to undertake a brief survey of the general situation in Eastern Europe which caused so many people to leave their homelands for a new life elsewhere. By understanding why at certain times particular groups of East Europeans sought refuge abroad we should also gain some insight into both the expected and actual responses of the receiving community.

This study is concerned with the responses to the three largest groups of East Europeans to settle in Britain since 1945 : the Poles and Ukrainians who arrived immediately after the Second World War, and the Hungarians who came following the crushed uprising of 1956; so, it is to the relevant history of Poland, the Ukraine, and Hungary that I shall now turn.

3. EVENTS LEADING TO POLISH DISPLACEMENT

German-occupied Poland

Although many Poles settled permanently outside their homeland after the Second World War, their journey had often begun as a temporary measure following the partition of Poland undertaken by the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany in September and October 1939.¹ Of the Western half of Poland which was brought under German control one part was annexed to the Reich whilst the rest was placed under the control of the 'General Gouvernement'. Approximately one third of Poland's pre-war territory and 45 per cent of her population were accounted for by the General Gouvernement.

This area provided a source of enforced labour for German industry; 400-480,000 Polish prisoners-of-war and concentration camp inmates carried out work for the Germans, at least 85 per cent of these people being forced to do such work rather than volunteering for it.² Polish prisoners-of-war in Germany were used as labour troops, known as Arbeitsgruppen, and forced to perform agricultural work. In return they were given no money wages but docketts which could be exchanged for approved goods only at specified traders. The Germans also broke

international law by incorporating large numbers of Polish prisoners-of-war into their own army.

Excluding prisoners-of-war, and in clear breach of the Hague Convention of 1907, over one million Poles were taken to work in Germany without compensation for being evicted from their properties.³ During the war approximately 1,600,000 Poles, both male and female, suffered enforced resettlement, 1,500,000 of these being in the first year of the war. They were allowed to take little luggage or cash with them and were transported by cattle truck. Many of the leading Poles were simply sent to concentration camps and made to carry out work whilst imprisoned.

In addition to the demographic measures of population transfers and resettlement, the Germans also resorted to extermination. The advancing German army had been followed into Poland by Himmler's Einsatzgruppen⁴ who, armed with lists of who to kill, moved around the country systematically draining Poland of what were considered to be its "life-forces"⁵ i.e. officials, doctors, teachers, the clergy and nobility. Public executions were frequent. Some of the executions were reprisal measures; for example it was reported in August 1940 that ten Polish girl guides had been executed near Skarzysko in

retaliation for the disappearance of some German munitions from the district.⁶

The 2,500,000 to 3,000,000 Jews in pre-war Poland⁷ were treated particularly severely; some of the Jews were forced to live in ghettos while the even more unfortunate were transported to one of the Nazi death camps, of which, eventually, there were six in Poland.⁸ In undertaking this policy the Germans were able to build upon the culture of antisemitism already in existence amongst sections of Polish society.⁹

The Polish campaign lasted only two months, yet during this time 20,000 Poles were executed.¹⁰ Moreover, losses continued to accumulate throughout the Second World War. Polish losses, including Jewish and military deaths, accounted for over six million Poles, in other words 17 per cent of the population¹¹ were killed, the largest proportion of which were civilians. However, this did not deter the Poles from forming a powerful resistance movement both inside and outside their country, the two most apparent displays of this opposition were revealed in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising of April 1943 and the 1944 Warsaw revolt by the Polish Home Army.

After peace had been declared in 1945 all of these factors played some part in the decisions of certain Poles not to return to their homeland.

Soviet-Polish relations

Hostility towards Russia was also a major factor in the reluctance of many Poles to return to their homeland. Russia and Poland had traditionally been enemies for many centuries and Polish mistrust of the Russians was inherited by successive generations. This mistrust was strengthened at the outbreak of the Second World War by the Nazi-Soviet Pact and subsequent partitioning of Poland by Germany and the USSR. Thousands of Polish citizens who now found themselves under Soviet occupation were deported to the remote Asiatic regions of the Soviet Empire. Estimates of the numbers affected by these deportations vary between one and a half to two million.¹² However, many faced a fate worse than Siberia, Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan; mass executions were not uncommon. After June 1941 the Soviet Union and Poland officially became allies and diplomatic relations between the two states were restored. The clauses of the Soviet-Polish agreement caused some of the ministers of the Polish government-in-exile to resign in protest, although at this stage few opposed the idea in principle as it was recognised that Poland could not possibly win a

war on two fronts against both Soviets and Germans.¹³ One clause of the agreement stipulated that the Poles in the Soviet Union were to be released and to be allowed to form the Second Polish Corps, of which it was agreed that General W. Anders would be appointed commander.¹⁴ However a deeprooted mistrust between the two states remained, particularly amongst those Poles who had suffered at the hands of the Soviets for the previous two years.

This hostility was further reinforced by the announcement made by the Germans in April 1943 of the discovery of the mass graves marking the massacre at Katyn of over 10,000 Polish officers who had been deported to the Soviet Union in 1939.¹⁵ The Soviet Union blamed the Germans for this atrocity but the Poles, rightly, suspected that the perpetrators were in fact the Soviets. The Polish Government-in-exile called for an international Red Cross enquiry, the Soviets refused and diplomatic relations between the two countries were severed. There were hopes in Britain that the diplomatic situation between Poland and the Soviet Union could be repaired but these hopes were dashed when on 4 July 1943 the Polish leader General Sikorski was killed in a plane crash. Sikorski had been one of the few Poles involved with the government-in-exile who had recognised the importance of maintaining a reasonably friendly

relationship with the Soviet leadership. This severing of diplomatic relations with the exiled Polish authorities proved convenient for the Soviet government which was already determined that there should be no independent Poland after the war. The USSR wanted instead to establish a Polish government which would be more congenial to Soviet influence and which would allow for the incorporation into the Soviet Union of the Polish Ukrainian territories. In terms of the British Government's response to the discovery of the mass graves at Katyn, there was a great deal of reluctance to blame their wartime ally for the atrocity. Even in 1976, when the Polish community in Britain unveiled a memorial to those who lost their lives there, the British government refused the invitation to have an official presence at the opening ceremony on the grounds that it would imply Soviet guilt. It was not until 28 July 1988 that the British government acknowledged for the first time that there was substantial circumstantial evidence that the perpetrators of the Katyn massacre were the forces of the USSR.¹⁶

Although Stalin paid lip service to the idea of an independent Poland after the end of the war, this was in fact contrary to his real aim of creating buffer states between the Soviet Union and the threat of German expansionism. A Polish state willing to placate the

Soviet Union would also enable the Soviets to claim the eastern Polish lands which it wanted to include in its own territory. However, it was clear that the Poles in London would not agree to this plan and subsequently, the Red Army entered Poland in January 1944 without first gaining the prior approval of the Polish government-in-exile. This was a clear rejection of the authority of the exiled Polish leaders. The Soviet Union went further in realising its desire for a pro-Soviet Polish government by initiating the formation of the Committee of National Liberation on 22 July 1944, and it was this Committee which was to become the basis for the Polish Provisional Government. Both the Committee and the subsequent Provisional Government which arose out of it were totally under Communist domination. This political manoeuvring on the part of the Soviet authorities antagonized many Poles living in exile who still considered the London-based government-in-exile to be the true government of Poland. On 21 April 1945 a twenty-year treaty of "friendship, mutual assistance and post-war co-operation" was signed by Poland and the USSR. For the majority of Poles, however, the Red Army's liberation of Poland at the end of the war represented not freedom but another occupation by a foreign power.

Not only was Poland itself to come under Soviet domination but parts of its pre-1939 eastern territory

were actually incorporated into the Soviet Union. This was justified by the Soviet Union on the grounds that the territory was inhabited not primarily by ethnic Poles but chiefly by ethnic Ukrainians, Byelorussians and Russians, and that these groups would prefer to join with their own ethnic groups in the Soviet Union rather than to remain minority groups within Poland. In the 1931 census it was shown that only 68.5 per cent of Poland's total population of 32,100,000 were ethnic Poles.¹⁷ The Soviet Union accused Poles who opposed the boundary changes of having imperialist aims in not recognizing the rights of Ukrainian and Byelorussian nationalities. The Polish government-in-exile rejected these charges. After 1945, Poles from the country's eastern territory faced the choice either of returning to the reconstituted Polish state, but not actually to their home territory, or returning to the areas in which they had lived, previously part of Poland but now part of the USSR. The former Polish citizens affected by these border changes included the Polish Ukrainians. There was a repatriation agreement signed in July 1945 between the Soviet Union and Poland which enabled Poles from this territory to be repatriated to the new Polish state. However, this agreement did not cover other nationalities, for example the Ukrainians and Byelorussians who were to be classed as Soviet citizens regardless of previous citizenship. The only exceptions to this were the Jews who were also

allowed to seek repatriation elsewhere. Nationalistic former Polish citizens, particularly the Ukrainians, often preferred to live in exile than under the Soviet rule against which some of them had undertaken armed resistance during the Soviet occupation throughout various periods during the course of the war.

In agreeing at the Yalta conference, held in February 1945 to discuss post-war settlements, that Poland, although nominally an independent state with a right to free elections, was to come under the Soviet sphere of influence in the post-war world, Britain and the United States of America to some extent shared indirectly in the responsibility of the Soviet Union for the imposition of a Communist system in Poland. After giving guarantees of Polish independence in the early stages of the war this left many exiled Poles, not surprisingly, feeling that they had been betrayed by the West. However, a great number of these Poles still chose to remain in the West rather than return home at the end of the war because they felt that living free in a country which had betrayed them was preferable to returning to a homeland under the shackles of a Communist regime. Thus, the imposition of Communism in post-war Poland resulted in the continued existence of political exiles. Having fled the totalitarian Nazi regime Polish liberals had no

desire to return to a country now in the grip of a totalitarian Communist regime.

Post-war Poland

The Communist system resulted not only in political exiles but also in economic migration from Poland. This process was exacerbated by the economic devastation of Poland in the course of the Second World War. The country's resources had been plundered by both the Germans and the Soviets. There were already reports as early as 1940 that food was scarce in most parts of Poland. It has been estimated that by the end of the Second World War more than half the country's livestock had been destroyed.¹⁸ In addition, the country had also suffered from the economic disruption and destruction that results from all wars. The transport system was in chaos. This situation was made even more chaotic by the forced migrations resulting from Poland's boundary changes. The Polish government originally accepted the offer of the United States government to receive economic aid as part of the Marshall Aid Plan but were forced to retract their earlier acceptance when put under pressure to do so by the Soviet government. It is not at all surprising that many already displaced Poles were reluctant to return home to face this economic chaos.¹⁹

The imposition of Communism in post-war Poland also gave many Poles another reason for not returning to their homeland : they faced a situation in which there was a lack of religious freedom and a genuine fear of persecution. The majority of Poles are Catholics and by 1945 the Soviets' oppression of the Catholic church in their own country was already well known. The pre-war Polish Communist Party had also been known to have atheistic views, something which had in the past been partly responsible for its lack of support. Thus, after 1945, many Catholic Poles chose not to return to a Communist Poland. The only statistics relating to the religious beliefs of the post-1945 Polish community in Britain are of those of the Polish Resettlement Corps in 1948 which revealed nearly 86 per cent of its membership to be Roman Catholic.

For the same reason many of the Polish Jews who had managed to survive the extermination policy of the Nazis also chose not to return, although for Jews this was not the only religious reason for seeking a new life elsewhere. The German occupation of Poland had emphasized the antisemitism of a significant element of the Polish people; one of the reasons for situating some of the Nazi death camps there was because the Germans knew the Poles would be more tolerant of the 'final solution' than certain other nations.²⁰ Not

surprisingly, many displaced Polish Jews were reluctant to return to their homeland at the end of the war. Many of them went to live in the newly formed state of Israel. Between 15 May 1948 to the end of 1951 it has been estimated that 106,125 Jews of Polish origin chose to emigrate to Israel, but a small number of Polish Jews did choose to live in Britain.²¹ However, of those who did decide to reside in Britain some disassociated themselves from the Polish community here and instead involved themselves in the local Jewish community. Figures for the Polish Resettlement Corps showed only 2 per cent of its members to be Jewish, an indication that even at this early stage few Polish Jews associated themselves with the Polish rather than Jewish community. In view of the antisemitic policies evident in Poland before the outbreak of the war, which had encouraged Jewish migration from Poland, and the Polish Jews' experiences under German occupation, it is no surprise that many chose not to return.

Displaced Persons

For many of the Poles who did not return at the end of the war the decision to remain in Britain was made easier by the fact that by 1945 they were already displaced persons. The route to Britain for most Poles had been far from direct, the majority having passed through several

countries during the course of the war. Over one million Poles, excluding prisoners of war, had been 'resettled' by the Nazis and used as forced labour and at the end of the war found their way to displaced persons' camps rather than trying to return home directly. For those who found themselves in camps run by the Western Allies they had the choice of going home or settling abroad as it had been decided before the end of the war that there would be no forced repatriation of pre-war Polish citizens. Over 21,000 Polish ex-prisoners of war were brought to the United Kingdom from German camps, including just over 2,000 political prisoners from the German concentration camps.²² In addition there were also 14,000 Poles who came to Britain directly from the Displaced Persons' camps as part of the European Volunteer Workers' scheme.²³

A significant number of these Poles may have been persuaded not to return home to Poland by the 150 Polish repatriation officers operating in the western camps who were under the control of the London-based government-in-exile and therefore were less than positive about the conditions prevailing in Poland to which repatriates would return.²⁴ There were attempts, nevertheless, by UNRRA and the British and American military to persuade the Poles to be repatriated. The amnesty declared by the Polish government was given publicity by the Allied

governments and it was made clear that although there would be no forcible repatriations it was the opinion of the Allies that the Poles should return to their country to help in the task of its post-war reconstruction. There were even material attempts at persuading the displaced Poles to return, at one stage, for example, a sixty day ration advance was offered to repatriates. However, despite all these attempts, as time passed and anti-Communist propaganda spread, the number of Poles willing to accept repatriation diminished.

Poles in Britain

(a) The Government-in-Exile

Not only were a large number of Poles already displaced but many were already in Britain and this made the country an obvious place of resettlement for those refugees not wishing to return to Poland. The Polish Government-in-exile had originally been formed in France under General Sikorski but after that country's fall in June 1940 the Poles moved their base to London for the remainder of the war.

However, the Polish Government in London had lost most of its influence in Poland after the cynical tactics of the Red Army caused the failure of the Warsaw rising in 1944.

It also began to lose control after the Soviets had installed the Polish Provisional Government under their own tight control at Lublin in 1944 and, on 5 July 1945, it was this Lublin government that the British and Americans recognized as the legal government of Poland. Churchill had already decided in 1944 that he would only support the Polish government-in-exile if it was prepared to accept the post war boundary changes and merge itself with the Lublin-based government, both of which it refused to do. Indeed, the Polish government-in-exile had been steadily losing the support of the British government following the death of its leader General Sikorski, who, unlike many of his colleagues who succeeded him, had been prepared to take a pragmatic view towards relations with the Soviet Union.

Most of the London Poles did not return immediately after the war because of both the political situation and the wartime experiences of their country. The majority of the Poles in exile were immediately suspicious of claims of political freedom in Poland. Their fears seemed to be confirmed by numerous reports in the British press of incidents of political suppression. For example, in 1946 there were reports of attacks on the Peasant Party in Poland, including the prohibition of its activities and the arrests of a number of its leaders. Some of the prominent London Poles did go back to Poland to take part

in the promised free elections however, but these did not take place until 1947 and left-wing intimidation was used to ensure a victory for the pro-Soviet groups. By December 1948 the Communist takeover of Poland had been completed. Not surprisingly a large number of exiled Poles felt disillusioned and betrayed by the role of the Allies in creating a Communist-dominated Poland in the post-war settlement.

(b) Polish troops in Britain

The politicians who formed the Government-in-Exile were also followed by the Polish troops who had escaped to the west and been organised under General Sikorski in France; again after that country's fall they moved to Great Britain. Approximately 35,500 members of the Polish armed forces arrived in Britain at this time and were accompanied by their wives and families who constituted a further 3,000 people.²⁵ They were also joined in 1941 by those Poles released by the Soviets who preferred to join the Polish Air Force and Navy based in England and units of the Polish Army based in Scotland rather than becoming members of the Anders Army/Polish Second Corps. Throughout the war these numbers were supplemented by further recruits, for example, 89,300 Poles who were ex-members of the Wehrmacht and Todt organization who had deserted or been captured by the Western forces, and also

21,750 Polish prisoners of war liberated from German camps.²⁶ A large number of the Polish forces had settled quite well in Britain, having already made friends here. There were large number of Poles who had been part of the forces under Western Command during the war. The Poles under Western command, wherever they were stationed at the end of the hostilities, were brought to Britain to be officially demobilised.

The Polish-Soviet amnesty had resulted in the release of approximately 1,500,000 Poles, with 100,000 of these men joining the Polish Second Corps. In 1946 the entire Polish Second Corps was brought to Britain for demobilization, many of whom remained, to be followed by their relatives who had been exiled in the Middle East and in Africa for much of the war after having themselves been released from captivity by the Soviet Union.

Over 110,000 Poles came to Britain to be demobilised, all of them having the choice between repatriation and resettlement, and fewer than one half of them finally chose to return to Poland. However, not all of these men stayed in Britain; the United States, Canada and Australia were all popular places of resettlement. When their resettlement in Britain became permanent in the eyes of the British authorities, although not necessarily from the viewpoint of the Poles themselves, those with

dependant relatives still in Poland were allowed to send for them and between 1945-50 such people accounted for 33,000 new arrivals in Britain.²⁷

Concluding comment

A Polish community had already existed in Britain before the arrival of the wartime Poles but those who arrived between 1941 and 1950 greatly strengthened the exiled Polish community based in Britain. Although restricted by Poland's emigration laws, Polish immigration to Britain has continued with some Polish political exiles seeking refuge in Britain. According to the 1971 Census 13,470 Poles, 75 per cent of them women, had arrived in Britain 1950-71. Since that time several hundred Poles have emigrated to Britain each year.

4. EVENTS LEADING TO UKRAINIAN DISPLACEMENT

Ukrainian nationalism within the Soviet Union

In the aftermath of the Second World War it was estimated that of all those people who had held Soviet citizenship before 1939 and had escaped repatriation to the Soviet Union, 52.6 per cent were of Ukrainian nationality.¹ The most important factor in Ukrainian reluctance to return to the homeland was fear of Soviet persecution. The majority of the population of the USSR were not Russian nationals, the largest single group of the non-Russians being the Ukrainians. In the Soviet Union's second census, conducted in 1926, of the 146,811,563 inhabitants of the entire Union, 29,018,187 lived within the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, 31,194,778 claimed to be of Ukrainian nationality, and 27,572,289 reported that Ukrainian was their primary language.² There were also substantial numbers of other non-Russian ethnic groups. Consequently, because of such high proportions of non-Russians within the population, the controlling Russian minority found it necessary to keep the other nationalities firmly in their place by whichever means considered to be the most effective.

The Ukrainians are fiercely nationalistic and the struggle for an independent Ukraine has been constant.

Following the revolution of 1917, the Ukraine declared its independence but, during the course of the ensuing civil war, it was over-run by the Bolsheviks who, although they had the support of just ten per cent³ of the population in the area, took control and imposed their own state apparatus on the country. Until August 1991 Ukraine was the largest nation in the world without independence.⁴ The Ukrainians never fully accepted their subsequent involuntary incorporation into the Soviet Union in 1922/3 and as a result they were unpopular with the Russians and were frequently persecuted. In the 1930s the cultural freedoms enjoyed in the previous decade were brought to a halt and there was an intensified effort by the Soviets to Russify the Ukraine. The Ukrainian peasantry suffered from Stalin's attempts to destroy the kulaks as a class. There was also suppression of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, as religious differences with the Russians further underlined their separate national identity. This was accompanied by the horrific man-made famine of 1932-3 in which Stalin deliberately starved the people of Ukraine by confiscating their supplies of grain. Stalin denied the existence of this famine and, when it did become known to the outside world, he refused to allow international relief into the area. It has been estimated that the resulting deaths numbered between five and eight million.⁵ There were also purges and political

trials, even affecting members of the Communist Party itself, which enabled the secret police to create an atmosphere of terror and oppression. As a result of the famine, the political liquidations and fierce battle for Ukraine during the Second World War, in which 5,500,000 Ukrainians died, the Ukraine lost 25 per cent of its population between 1930 and 1945.⁶

A resurgence of Ukrainian nationalism at the outbreak of the Second World War led to fighting with the Soviet troops. The Soviet authorities attempted to deny the existence of strong nationalist feelings amongst the Ukrainians; for example in May 1942, amidst heavy fighting between Soviet and Nazi troops in Ukraine, despatches from the front were issued which described Ukrainian peasants "bringing out red flags that they had concealed behind stoves and under floors to greet the advancing army"⁷. At the same time the Soviets were deporting and executing known Ukrainian nationalist leaders. In 1941/2 the Ukrainian Insurgent Army was formed to fight against both the Russian and German armies. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists also played a part in this civil war, particularly in the previously Polish-dominated territory of western Ukraine where it had already been in operation during the 1930s. After the spring offensive of 1944, when the Red Army cleared the Ukraine of its German invaders this fight

against the Soviet forces did not end but was to continue until after the end of the war, well into the 1950s.

Although most hoped one day to return to an independent Ukraine, the fear of reprisals kept some displaced nationalist Ukrainians from returning after 1945 to a homeland within the Soviet Union. In addition, between 1947 and 1949, some groups from the Ukrainian Insurgent Army crossed over to the Western Allied zones of Germany in order to surrender.

Ukrainians during the Second World War

Nationalist feeling caused some Ukrainians to enrol in the Ukrainian First Division of the Waffen S.S., also known as the Halychyna Division, which had been formed by the German army in 1943 as a means of controlling the Ukrainians' fight against the Russians. This unit was used only for the fight on the eastern front, it was never intended to use it against the western allies. Many Ukrainians were led by the Germans to mistakenly believe that Hitler would support, or at least tolerate, an independent Ukraine if this meant that Soviet power was broken. However, when in June 1941 the faction of the OUN led by Stepan Bandera declared an independent Ukraine, the Germans reacted by sending the Ukrainian nationalist leaders to concentration camps. The

Ukrainians had badly misjudged Hitler's motives, something which only became clear to them when the Germans began to replace the idea of liberation with their own methods of police control. The Ukrainians had believed one of the major motivating factors behind Hitler's invasion of Ukraine was his fear and hatred of Bolshevism but Hitler also had a racial hatred of Slavs and wanted to exterminate them. He was therefore not at all predisposed to Ukrainian independence despite continued declarations to the contrary throughout the course of the war. The German interest in Ukraine lay not in achieving independence for its people but in exploiting its rich economic resources. A further reason behind the invasion was the desire for 'Lebensraum' or 'living space' for the Aryan race and this meant the subjugation, not independence, of other nations. The Nazi invasion of the Ukraine when seen in hindsight as part of Operation Barbarossa was clearly never going to pave the way for an independent Ukraine to be tolerated by the Reich.

Most of the Ukrainians in the German army were therefore not believers in the fascist cause but nationalists. However, they fought fiercely and if they had gone back to a Ukraine which was still part of the Soviet Union they would have been condemned as war criminals and traitors and as such would have faced persecution and

possibly even death. This view was reinforced by the way in which they knew their compatriots still in the Soviet Union to have been treated, some of whom had been deported to the east on charges not of fighting for the Germans but merely in failing to resist the German occupation. Soviet reprisals on the Ukrainian population were also known to have taken a more brutal form than deportation, for example, 95 mass graves had been found at Vinnytsya in 1943 which contained the bodies of 9,439 people who had been shot by the Soviet secret police, the NKVD, mostly during the period 1938-1940. The Soviets were very keen to have those people who had fought for the Germans repatriated but were not always successful in their attempts to have this done. For example, in March 1947 the Soviet pressure for the return of 8,400 Ukrainians who had been members of the 14th Waffen-SS Division held at a prisoner of war camp in Italy at Rimini after their surrender to the Western Allies at the end of the war resulted instead in the British government transferring them to Britain.

Another group of Ukrainians who feared persecution if they returned home at the end of the war were those who had been taken by the Germans as Ostarbeiter, considered by the Germans as the lowest form of foreign workers and used for forced labour. The Germans had large parts of Ukraine under occupation for long periods of the war and

deported large numbers of Ukrainians into Germany, manpower being considered just one more of Ukraine's natural resources available for exploitation. An efficient maximization of manpower was the aim, and to this end the Germans generally took only the young and healthy. At the end of the war there were between 2,500,000-3,000,000 Ukrainians in Germany and Austria, approximately 2,300,000 of these were males under the age of thirty who had been used as enforced labourers.⁸ Although they had not volunteered for this work, they feared that the Soviet authorities would still see them as collaborators and traitors. Their fears had some justification as leaving the Soviet Union was classified as a treasonable offence in Soviet law. Many of the Ostarbeiter who returned after 1945 were not allowed to return to the Ukraine but were deported to Siberia and the eastern provinces of the USSR. The Soviets, fearing potential troublemakers, were determined that Soviet citizens who, for whatever reason, had come into contact with the West and its ideals should be isolated from the rest of the population. Even those refugees who were not officially punished and allowed to return to their homes risked the unfavourable reactions of the local population who had been told that all those remaining in Germany at the end of the war were collaborators and traitors.

Even those who had been part of the Polish or Soviet forces who been captured as prisoners of war were not safe. A similar suspicion of collaboration was also felt by the Soviets towards these men as it was felt that they should have preferred death to prisoner status. Indeed, Soviet soldiers were ordered to commit suicide if it was the only means possible to avoid capture. The Communist authorities spread rumours that even if these men had not been collaborators at the time of capture it was possible that they had been recruited as spies against their compatriots whilst confined in the prisoner of war camps. Some suffered worse fates than the the propaganda-induced hostility of neighbours; some were refused permission to return home and were instead exiled to Siberia, whilst others were executed as soon as they returned to the Soviet Union. It has been estimated that approximately 300,000 returning Soviet citizens were sentenced in this way.⁹

Polish Ukrainians

However, not all Ukrainians were from the Soviet Union, some had lived in parts of the Ukraine which were territorially in pre-war Poland. Indeed, the 4,500,000 Ukrainians¹⁰ living in inter-war Poland were the country's largest national minority group , accounting for 13.8 per cent of Poland's population in the census of

1931.¹¹ The changing of the Polish-Soviet boundaries in 1945 meant that this was no longer the case. These Ukrainians, if they had returned home, would still have been living on the same land but would have been under the jurisdiction of a different country. With the knowledge that Stalin had already tried to starve to death many of their Ukrainian compatriots in the previous decade it is unsurprising that many of them decided to seek a new life elsewhere. Large numbers had already experienced such repression for themselves at the hands of the Soviet army when, after the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the USSR had invaded eastern Poland and between 1939-41 imposed their own strict regime which included widespread deportations and murders. The Soviets had formerly described this annexation as "an act of self-determination on the part of the local population"¹² and maintained that it was popular amongst the majority of the population with Khrushchev, then secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party, claiming that workers and intellectuals were now united in one body and "if anyone tries to stop us, we will knock them into a cocked hat".¹³

The Ukrainians were also unable to continue to reside in Poland because the new Polish Government were unwilling to have them back as their nationalism was considered troublesome and the Poles had no desire to repeat the

minorities' problems they had experienced in the inter-war period. During this period the ethnic minorities within Poland had suffered discrimination in religious, cultural and economic activity. State-controlled employment, including teaching, the police and the judiciary, was generally reserved for people of Polish ethnic origin, who had already benefited from such ethnic discrimination in all levels of education. The Polish government had encouraged colonization of Ukrainian lands by ethnic Poles. In addition many non-Polish national political and cultural organizations were banned, and both the Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Catholic Churches were discriminated against.

The Ukrainians had also long been suspected by the Poles of being sympathetic to the Germans. An indication of such feelings can be found as early in the war as 1939 when, immediately preceding and following the German invasion, many Ukrainians were evacuated eastwards to prevent their collaboration with the invading German forces. The Poles' suspicions of pro-Germanism amongst the Ukrainians was reinforced by the Nazis' treatment of the Ukrainian population in German-controlled areas of Poland after the outbreak of war in 1939. The Ukrainians were allowed better education and better jobs than other sections of the population by the German authorities.

They were even allowed to form their own 8,000 strong militia, the Sitch strilki.¹⁴

However, as the war progressed there was some recognition by the Polish authorities that Ukrainians were not all under suspicion and it was proposed that they, like the Polish Jews, should have two representatives on the Polish National Council. This proposal, made in February 1942, can also be seen as an attempt to placate the Soviet Union with whom Poland had signed a declaration of friendship and mutual assistance only two months earlier. In September 1944 the Ukrainian Soviet Republic and the Polish Committee of National Liberation signed an agreement concerning transfers of population and between 1945 and May 1947, as Europe began to assume its new form, many Ukrainians found remaining in Poland were handed over to the Russians, with the use of force when necessary, by the Polish authorities who were coming under increasing Communist Party domination. The Polish Communist Party had long advocated Ukrainian "self-determination" within the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Subcarpathian Ruthenia

There were also Ukrainians in Subcarpathian Ruthenia which was ceded to the Soviet Union, becoming part of the

Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine in 1945. It has been estimated that approximately 500,000 Ukrainians lived in this area.¹⁵ Since 1919 Subcarpathian Ruthenia had been under the control of Czechoslovakia but in 1939 it became independent under the name of Carpatho-Ukraine. The reality of its independence was of short duration as it was quickly overpowered by Hungarian armed forces, encouraged by their German allies. Desirous of unification with its ethnic motherland of Ukraine it did not however want this to occur under Soviet domination. If Carpatho-Ukraine was to again lose its independence in 1945 the 75 per cent of the population who were Ukrainian¹⁶ were generally not keen for this to mean Soviet domination as many could still remember the Soviet suppression of the Ukrainian Republic in 1919. A return to Czech rule was viewed as preferable as this was known to be not as harsh as that of the Soviets. When the Soviet Union assumed control of Carpatho-Ukraine it was determined that Ukrainian nationalism was not to become a force within the area. Many of the Ukrainians in the area chose or were forced to remain but an estimated 30,000 ethnic Czechs and Ukrainians left Carpatho-Ukraine during 1945-1946, infiltrating themselves into the Czechoslovak Republic.¹⁷ It is possible that some of these Ukrainians re-emigrated elsewhere from Czechoslovakia.

Attitudes towards Communism

Whether the Ukrainian refugees came from the Soviet Union or Poland after the Second World War a dislike of Communism was common. The Ukrainian peasantry had traditionally had possession of their own homes and land therefore Communist seizures and redistribution via collectivization did not appeal to them. Eastern Ukraine had been collectivized prior to the Second World War and between 1946-49 there was a vigorous collectivization programme in Western Ukraine to bring its economic system into line with the rest of the Soviet Union. There was the confiscation of land and its redistribution, and the nationalization of banks and big businesses. Also, although western Ukrainians had suffered Polish discrimination during the inter-war period, they knew that Soviet political and cultural persecution could be far worse than anything experienced under Polish rule.

This dislike of Communism and Communists was particularly evident in the displaced persons' camps where anti-Communist sentiments were often openly expressed by the residents, sometimes the expression of these feelings exploded into full scale demonstrations, for example that of Ukrainian and Baltic refugees in Munich on 10 April 1949 which American troops had to resort to the use of teargas to disperse.¹⁸ In some instances there were

physical attacks on Soviet repatriation officers. There was also a case of Russian journalists having stones and tomatoes thrown at them by Ukrainians in a spontaneous demonstration at the displaced persons' camp in Hanover which the journalists had asked to be shown around by the British.¹⁹ The quote "I fought for myself, for my people, not for Stalin"²⁰ epitomises the thoughts and feelings of all the nationalities seeking refuge from the Soviet regime at the end of the Second World War.

Economic factors

Although political factors were the primary motivation, economic factors also dissuaded some Ukrainians from returning at the end of the war. During the course of the Second World War the territory of Ukraine had been bitterly fought over and as a result had suffered economic devastation. This was partly a result of the fighting itself and partly related to the destruction caused by the scorched earth policy which had been used by both the German Army and the Red Army when in retreat. The purpose of this policy was to deny the advancing enemy the use of local resources, particularly buildings, food, and industrial and agricultural machinery. Immediately after the war the Ukrainians were also forced to make large gifts of grain and other food supplies to the Soviets as a sign of their gratitude for being

liberated from the German occupation. Although Ukraine did receive material aid from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, it received one of the lowest allocations despite being one of the most economically devastated areas of Europe.²¹ Ukrainians from the Soviet Union who had been living in the West during the war had observed that although the West itself had undergone hardships during the course of the war the economic situation there was still preferable to that in the USSR. Also, many of the Soviet nonreturners were of kulak origins,²² who would clearly have never been enamoured by the Soviet agricultural system of collectivization by which the State repossessed their families' land, and of western Ukrainians had also had some experience of this system during the Soviet occupation of Poland's eastern provinces 1939-1941. For Ukrainians who had been living outside the Soviet Union before the outbreak of the Second World War the Communist economic system, with agriculture, commerce and industry all under government control, was unlikely to appeal to all.

Forcible repatriations

For those Ukrainians who found themselves displaced at the end of the war some were fortunate enough to have a choice between repatriation and resettlement. However,

Ukrainians in the Soviet zones of immediate post-war Europe were forcibly repatriated, including the 'repatriation' to the USSR of Polish Ukrainians. In September 1945 the Soviet forces found themselves responsible for the care and repatriation of some 6,869,660 people of Soviet, Polish, Hungarian and Czech nationality²³ and although there are no official statistics there would have been a significant number of Ukrainians amongst this figure.

In the first months following the cease-fire the Western zones also forcibly repatriated Ukrainians and other Soviet citizens as had previously been agreed at the Yalta conference. However, the Western Allies soon began to find adherence to this policy undesirable. It soon became apparent that physical force would be necessary for the repatriation of thousands of people to Soviet controlled lands. Amongst these were more than 200,000 Ukrainians, one-third of them from the Soviet Union and two-thirds from other East European countries, primarily Poland, who were refusing repatriation from the western zone. The majority of these Ukrainians were in the American zone of Germany, although 54,580 were to be found in the British zone.²⁴ Those trying to avoid repatriation were aided by the shortage of available transport to return them to the Soviet Union. At the same time, growing public concern over the treatment

these people would face following repatriation and knowledge of disturbances and suicides committed by refugees desperate to avoid returning made the policy increasingly unpopular. As the Cold War set in, these forcible repatriations by the Western Allies ceased, although voluntary repatriation was still to be encouraged. Despite this, in the poll taken by UNRRA in May 1946 the Ukrainians in the displaced persons' camps in Germany answered overwhelmingly that they did not wish to be repatriated.²⁵ The substantial number of non-returners and the decline in east-west diplomatic relations led to accusations from the Soviet government that the British and American authorities were placing obstacles in the way of Soviet citizens in the western zones of Germany wishing to return to their homelands. These allegations were refuted by both the British and the Americans who reiterated that although repatriation was encouraged they would not forcibly repatriate people who claimed not to have been Soviet citizens before 1 September 1939.

When the treatment of displaced persons became more organised in late 1945, following the initial confusion after the cessation of hostilities, only those people who identified themselves as Soviet citizens were to be treated as such. However, those who claimed Ukrainian nationality would be classed as Soviet citizens as, due

to Ukraine not being an independent state before the war, their own separate nationality was not officially recognised. Consequently, any Ukrainians wishing to avoid repatriation to the Soviet Union would have to claim the nationality of another country, for example Poland, or be classified as stateless or of undetermined origin. Falsification of documents by the Ukrainian community inside the camps was common. According to United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration statistics, there were 9,190 Ukrainians claiming Polish citizenship in December 1945, by June 1947 this figure had risen to 106,549.²⁶ Soviet repatriation officers were not pleased by this shift in policy and often made claims that some of the displaced persons in the western zones of Austria and Germany were indeed Soviet citizens but, except in the case of war criminals, these claims were generally ignored. After the Second World War there were some two million Ukrainians living outside their homeland.²⁷ However, there were 2,272,000 Soviet citizens who had been transferred, whether forcibly or not, to the control of the Soviet forces.²⁸ These repatriations were largely completed within the first two years after the end of the war. Between 1 July 1947 and 31 December 1951 there were a mere 1,836 Soviet repatriations from the western zones.²⁹ However, it is the displaced Ukrainians who took advantage of the European Volunteer Worker schemes and sought resettlement

in Britain who are the concern of this particular study.³⁰

5. THE EVENTS IN HUNGARY LEADING TO THE FLIGHT ABROAD

The Communist takeover of Hungary

In April 1945 Soviet troops replaced the Axis forces as the occupying power in Hungary. The indigenous German minority amongst the Hungarian population was then forcibly expelled from the country under the instigation of the Hungarian Communist Party, despite the disapproval of non-socialist opponents. The Soviets were thus in a perfect position from which to exert their influence over the Hungarians, a situation which had been agreed upon by the major Allied powers in negotiations concerning the political character of post-war Europe.

Immediately after the cessation of hostilities a Hungarian Popular Front was established to rule the country. By far the largest single party in this organization was the Independent Smallholders' Party, which had gained 245 of the 421 seats in the 1945 parliamentary elections.¹ However the Smallholders were unable to take advantage of this numerical dominance as they were quickly hit by internal divisions which ultimately resulted in the Party crumbling away to nothing. Although the Communists were not the largest party in the Front, it came to be manipulated by them and, through skilful political manoeuvring and a series

of underhand measures, they were able to also seize control of Hungary itself.

This was despite the fact that they in no way had the full support of the people. In November 1945 the Communists gained only 17 per cent of the vote² in the free elections which had been demanded by the Western Allies and, regardless of a new Communist-inspired electoral law, intimidatory tactics and fraud, they could still gain only 22 per cent of the vote in the August 1947 elections.³ These were the last democratic elections to take place in Hungary before 1990. Having achieved political dominance by the summer of 1948, the Communist Party, now officially known as the Hungarian Workers' Party after its merger with the Social Democrats, set about consolidating its position through the use of systematic terror, in which it was ably assisted by the secret police, the AVH. When more elections took place in 1949 the Communists ensured that there were no opposition candidates to its 'Independent People's Front'.

The Hungarian Communist Party's Stalinist leader, Matyas Rakosi, who had been resident in Moscow throughout the war, introduced forced collectivization of the land into Hungary and embarked upon a policy of rapid industrialization, following the Soviet model of economic

growth, which resulted in an increase in production levels but a severe decline in quality. This was accompanied by fear and terror of the secret police who deported and executed at will. All sections of the community, including Party members, suffered. Following orders received from Moscow in 1948, show trials of eight Communist Party members were conducted in 1949, the most prominent victim being Laszlo Rajk. Of the eight on trial, five were executed. Subsequent to the show trials, there were a number of secret trials of so-called Rajkists, which resulted in more executions.⁴ In 1951/2 tens of thousands of people were deported to mines, state farms and concentration camps, it having been estimated that one family in five had one of its members or a close friend deported.⁵ However, this policy of fear was not entirely successful as instead of achieving indoctrination of the population it spread hatred of the Communists, and created a fertile atmosphere for revolt. Following Stalin's death in 1953 and the subsequent unrest in East Germany the Soviets thought it prudent to replace the slavish Stalinist Rakosi with the more liberal Imre Nagy.

Nagy's first attempt at reform

Nagy, although a Communist, had been critical of Rakosi's economic and political methods and once in power he

embarked on a series of policies collectively known as the 'New Course' which were designed both to improve the economy and to reduce the amount of terror in society. The introduction of this programme of liberalization was done under the auspices of the authorities in Moscow which had launched a similar programme in the Soviet Union. Hungary's 'New Course' included the rehabilitation of those imprisoned and deported under Rakosi's regime. Many of these people were to become vociferous opponents of the system once released. However, the removal of Malenkov from power in the Soviet Union in February 1955 undermined Nagy's position in Hungary. The Soviets disliked the pace of Nagy's reforms and in April 1955 he was replaced as Prime Minister by Andras Hegedus. Real power however was returned to Rakosi. Yet although he returned to power Rakosi found it impossible to reimpose the tight control over the country he had previously had. This was the result of both internal and external developments. In Hungary itself his position was weakened by the continuing economic difficulties and, as a result of the resurgence of the purge victims, by division and criticism from within the Party. Externally his position was undermined by changes in Soviet policy where Khrushchev proceeded to denounce Stalinism and attempted to normalize relations with Yugoslavia. After riots erupted in Poland on 22 June 1956 the Hungarian Communist Party became

apprehensive about its own increasingly precarious dominance over the people of their own country and issued a warning to workers to be vigilant against demagogues and demonstrations. The Soviets, fearing that the situation in Poland might reproduce itself in Hungary, forced the resignation of the unpopular Rakosi on 18 July.

The 1956 uprising

Rakosi was replaced as Party Secretary by his close associate, and fellow 'Muscovite', Erno Gero. This was a far from popular choice amongst Hungarians. Discontent continued to grow and on 23 October 1956 a march was planned which was meant to express Hungarian solidarity with the Poles who had just achieved the reinstatement of the popular leader Wladyslaw Gomulka. This primarily student demonstration grew rapidly in size until thousands of workers were also involved. Furthermore, the large crowd was joined by police and soldiers as the march progressed. The students' demonstration had

"set the masses in motion by providing a physical stimulus and an emotional appeal. It triggered an unplanned and unforeseeable chain reaction."⁶

By nightfall the violence and shooting had begun, instigated by the AVH who shot at the peaceful protesters from the inside of the radio station and with this action turned the demonstration into the 'revolution'. The Party leadership reacted by making Nagy Prime Minister, in the hope of appeasing the insurgents, and calling in the Soviet troops, in the hope of controlling them. On 24 October the Hungarian Government was forced to declare a state of emergency and the introduction of martial law.

The uprising very quickly developed an anti-Soviet character as "the entry of the Russian army gave the Hungarians a clearer purpose and a visible enemy"⁷ and the excesses of the 'liberating' Red Army in 1945 had also not gone unforgotten. Nagy did not get involved in this anti-Soviet sentiment and, whilst announcing the commencement of negotiations for the withdrawal of Soviet troops on 28 October, he recognized that Hungarian-Soviet friendship was a necessity if his reforms were to be successful. It was also on 28 October that the Party leadership began to describe the uprising as a national democratic revolution rather than as a counter-revolution, which had been the original official definition of the situation. On 30 October Nagy, under pressure from the Hungarian people who no longer wanted the dominance of the Party, announced that a coalition

government was to replace the existing single-party system.

When on 31 October Nagy announced his intention to withdraw Hungary from the Warsaw Pact the Soviets, who had been watching events very closely, decided that the pace of reform in Hungary was far too rapid and that intervention had become a necessity. On 1 November 1956 the Soviet troops which had been retreating began to move back towards Budapest. Nagy reacted by sending a message to the United Nations Secretary General asking for the 'Hungarian question' to be put on the agenda.

The Hungarians still hoped that the West would intervene but the primary concern of the West remained with events in Suez. This preoccupation of the West with Suez concurrent with events in Hungary was still seen as regrettable by many in Britain over thirty years later, including a number of Labour Party politicians.⁸ Also, relations between the United States and the Soviet Union during this period of the Cold War would have made such an act of intervention by the West unlikely. On 3 November the Soviets captured the Hungarian Defence Minister Pal Maleter and on the following day, as Soviet troops attacked Budapest, Imre Nagy was forced to seek refuge in the Yugoslav Embassy. Also on 4 November Janos Kadar, Communist chief of the renamed Hungarian Socialist

Workers' Party, who had been released from gaol in 1954 as a result of Nagy's 'New Course' premiership, announced the formation of the Hungarian Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government which was to be led by himself and which had the support of the Soviet Union. It was this government led by Kadar which the Soviet Union claimed called for their intervention to restore order to the situation. By 14 November all armed resistance had ceased⁹ and, although strikes and demonstrations led by the newly formed Workers' Councils continued for some months afterwards, the uprising was effectively at an end.

The Hungarian refugees

It was when the Soviets started their second attack on Budapest and began the savage reimposition of Soviet domination that the "mass exodus"¹⁰ from Hungary of what is generally accepted to have been approximately 200,000 people, or two per cent of the population, began.

The Austrian and Yugoslav border guards would have had no difficulty in stopping the refugees but instead helped them as far as possible. Some of the Hungarian border guards were also helpful towards the refugees. In their rush to escape from the arrests and reprisals which they knew would follow based on their past experiences of

the Communist secret police, the refugees could take with them only what they could carry, all their other belongings had to be left behind. One refugee, now resident in Sheffield, remembers how he gave the border guard a packet of cigarettes to let him through to the West, that packet of cigarettes and the clothes he wore being all he took with him as he left. The border with Austria was open for a time before the barbed wire and minefields returned, Pryce-Jones believes it is possible that the Hungarian authorities allowed these discontented people to leave as their absence from the country would reduce the likelihood of a further uprising.¹¹

However, not all the fleeing refugees were fortunate enough to escape. In November 1956, it was reported that four Hungarian refugees, including a woman and child, had been shot dead only 50 yards from the Austrian border by a member of the Hungarian secret police on a motorbike "steering with one hand and with a tommy gun in the other".¹² The Austrian border guard reacted by rushing forward to shield six other refugees who were also crossing. There was also an incident in which Austrian border guards shot dead one armed Soviet soldier and wounded and arrested another who had crossed over into Austrian territory in pursuit of a group of refugees and had refused to halt when instructed to do so by the Austrian border guards. By late November 1956 Soviet

tanks had the border sealed although refugees could still escape by night, if they had not been captured hiding in the woods during the day, as the Soviet troops left their positions after dark fearing attacks by Hungarian rebels. By mid-December, as crossing to the West became increasingly difficult, the majority of the refugees who escaped Hungary had already left for their new life abroad.

It is estimated that approximately 85 per cent of those that left Hungary after the events of 1956 were under the age of forty-five,¹³ a large proportion of whom had actively participated in the uprising. There were even reports of unaccompanied children crossing the border with labels tied around their necks carrying messages such as "Take good care of me, my daddy has gone back to fight for Hungary."¹⁴ However, their presence among the refugee numbers does seem to have been over-emphasized. Also, not all those who left were politically committed young people or writers and other members of the intelligentsia. Towards the end of 1956 many of those leaving for a life in the West came from the middle classes¹⁵, as well as blue collar workers and peasants,¹⁶ and were probably influenced as much, if not more so, by economic than political factors. Hungarian historians Balogh and Jakab, writing whilst Hungary remained under Communist rule, claimed that part of the

people "had been temporarily confused but were otherwise innocent" and then later returned to Hungary¹⁷, but in fact only about ten per cent of the refugees of 1956 ever returned.¹⁸ Among the refugees there was also another group which fled to the West which could never have returned to Hungary, these were the criminals who had been released from gaol in the confusion of events in October 1956.¹⁹

The West may have been of little actual help to the Hungarians during the uprising but its attitude to the refugees was far more positive. The Hungarian revolution was seen by the West as having been a "brave and tragic cause, an appeal of the just few against the tyrannical many"²⁰, and as such the Hungarian refugees were viewed with high regard. This was reflected in the 'Time' magazine "Man of the Year" award for 1956 being given to the "Hungarian Freedom Fighter". Within six months of the first refugees arriving in Austria thirty-five countries had offered Hungarians permanent asylum.²¹ Of the 180,000 refugees in Austria 154,000 of them left for other countries. Approximately one-half of these went overseas, the rest remaining in Europe. Of those who remained in Europe more than two-thirds were dispersed among the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Switzerland. The United Kingdom received over 21,000 refugees, one-third of whom later left to seek permanent

resettlement elsewhere. The vast majority of the refugees who settled overseas went to the United States, Canada, and Australia.²²

Hungary after the uprising

Within Hungary the new Kadar government quickly renounced Nagy's policies. The government's attitude to the events of October 1956 were that they constituted a counter-revolution. By 9 November 1956 workers were already being told that if they did not end their strikes and return to work they would lose their jobs. Shopkeepers were informed that if they did not open their shops then anyone who was prepared to break in and open it themselves would be recognized as the new legal owner. Throughout December 1956 many civil servants, teachers, journalists and trade union officials thought to be loyal to the ideas behind the rising were removed from their posts having been termed 'unreliable'. On 11 January 1957 the government declared its opposition to the proposals to set up a United Nations investigation committee on the 'Hungarian question' and on 27 May 1957 an agreement was signed with the Soviet Union which gave legal status to Soviet troops provisionally stationed in Hungary. A reorganization was also made of the Hungarian police and army, and a workers' militia was created to help defend Hungary against further counter-revolution.

However, this did not prevent the United Nations Special Committee on Hungary producing its report in June 1957 in which it concluded that the events in Hungary in October 1956 had indeed constituted a spontaneous national uprising.

For those people involved in the uprising who had stayed in Hungary there were serious consequences. Thousands were arrested and, on police recommendation, it was possible for them to be detained without trial. Others found themselves being deported to the Soviet Union. In Britain it was reported that those being deported included anyone considered old enough to carry weapons which included any boys more than eight years old.²³ A number of Hungarians were executed for their part in the "counter-revolution". Many of these executions took place without any formal trial and of the trials of rebels which did take place most were carried out in secret. According to official figures, approximately 2,700 people were killed, 20,000 wounded, and 20,000 imprisoned in the repression of the 1956 uprising.²⁴ It has also been estimated that more than 450 people received death sentences for their part in the uprising.²⁵ Among them were Nagy, Maleter and other leading persons in the uprising who, despite assurances from Kadar of safe passage from the Yugoslav embassy, were abducted by the Soviets who then forced the

Hungarian government to hold a secret trial and execution of these men in June 1958. In the Spring of 1959 an amnesty was announced for those who had been sentenced after having been found guilty of counter-revolutionary actions, and a considerable number were released from prison. By 1962 more than 95 per cent imprisoned for their part in the uprising had been released.²⁶

Although Kadar had initially renounced Nagy's policies in 1956 in the following decades he was himself to gradually reform Hungary to a certain extent under the guise of "He who is not against us, is with us", a phrase first used by Kadar himself in December 1961. This was tolerated by the Soviet regime under Leonid Brezhnev as at no time did any of these reforms threaten the Communist domination of the state. Kadar used his reforms to quickly consolidate his position of power; economic policy was made to be more responsive to living standards and the extent of secret police terror was reduced. Travel to the West was also made easier; in 1953 only 1132 Hungarians, mainly sportsmen and officials, were allowed to do so, in 1958 this figure had risen to 21,000, by 1962 to 65,000, in 1963 to more than 120,000 and to 708,000 in 1986.²⁷ The anniversary of the uprising was officially ignored in Hungary until 1966 when the Party newspaper Nepszabadsag referred to the counter-revolution, blaming it on the conditions created by Rakosi, the treason of Nagy and the

Roman Catholic Cardinal Mindszenty, and "international imperialism led by the United States". The article also described the Soviets as Hungary's "tried and true friends" and "whose soldier sons shed their blood in saving the regime".²⁸ The events of 1956 were not mentioned by Kadar himself until May 1972 when in his birthday speech he referred to the "counter-revolution" as a "national tragedy - a tragedy for the Party, for the working class, for the Hungarian people and also for individuals".²⁹ It was not until after Kadar's fall during the upheavals which took place in Eastern Europe in 1989 that the Hungarian government finally fully rehabilitated the leaders of 1956, giving them a state reburial, and ceased officially to term the uprising as a counter-revolution.

**PART TWO : THE RESPONSES TO THE REFUGEES ON A NATIONAL
LEVEL**

**6. A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE RESPONSES OF POST-WAR BRITAIN
TO EAST EUROPEAN REFUGEES**

Introduction

One of the greatest problems left behind in the aftermath of the Second World War was the large number of people in Europe who had been left displaced by the events of the previous six years. The scale of the refugee problem was unprecedented in Europe.¹ For many their greatest desire was to return home but in some cases that hope was frustrated whether as a result of their own actions during the war or because of the territorial settlements agreed upon by the Allied powers as part of the peace settlement in Europe. This was particularly true of displaced persons (DPs) from Eastern Europe. Initially there were a number of forcible repatriations, particularly to areas under the post-war jurisdiction of the Soviet Union, but shifts in foreign policy, as the cold war took hold of the popular imagination and co-operation between the West and the Soviet Union was replaced by confrontation, resulted in the cessation of such forcible repatriations as western governments became unwilling to return people to what was increasingly seen

as a Communist dictatorship abhorrent to the western democracies. Subsequently, international responsibility for the welfare of the displaced persons and their eventual resettlement was brought to bear on the West. A number of countries accepted refugees, the largest numbers being absorbed by the United States of America, Canada, Great Britain and Australia.

The manpower shortage

However, humanitarian concerns were not the overriding feature of the post-war population resettlements. The change in attitude towards the Soviet Union and the subsequent policy shift away from forced repatriations was beneficial to the post-war manpower drive as refugees unwilling to return to the Soviet Union represented a useful source of additional labour available to the Western economies which were undergoing a desperate process of post-war reconstruction. By using the labour of the displaced persons the Western powers were also able to ease the economic burden of the administration and maintenance of the DP camps.

There was particular interest in using these sources of labour in agricultural work due to concern that there would be insufficient manpower in this sector of the economy after the prisoners of war held in Britain, the

majority of whom had been used in essential agricultural work, were repatriated. Prisoners-of war in Britain had either to have been repatriated or conferred with civilian status by 31 December 1948. In addition to the new influx of displaced persons from Europe the ex-prisoners of war were also given the option of remaining in Britain for an initial period of a further six months to continue with essential work, mainly in agriculture.

There were also concerns about supplying industries essential to the reconstruction of Britain and its economy with sufficient labour. This was also true of a number of other countries who accepted refugees, for example, Belgium's contribution to the refugee problem was to accept 20,000 miners and their families from amongst the Poles and inhabitants of the displaced persons camps.² In Britain two of the first industries in which an agreement about the employment of EVWs was reached were the cotton and wool industries. These were thought to be essential industries in that they greatly contributed to the export drive Britain required to gain foreign currency. However, by 30 June 1947 of the 6,300 EVWs who had been placed in employment since 1 January 1947, only 564 had been placed in textiles, the most common employment being agriculture with 2,268 European Volunteer Workers and hospital work with 1,836 EVWs.³ One of the main reasons for their slow absorption into

the textile industry was the lack of suitable accommodation in the areas where work was available.

More women were encouraged to take advantage of the labour schemes than were men because many of the labour shortages were in jobs traditionally thought of as women's employment. This was particularly the case in the textile industries. These shortages were often due to British women who had worked during the war returning to the home when it ended. Female refugees were also thought to be less troublesome than men and easier to absorb into the British community. Despite this, women accounted for only one-quarter of all refugees who entered Britain as part of the EVW schemes.⁴

The foreign labour schemes

The first foreign labour scheme to be undertaken in Britain to deal with these labour shortages was the Balt Cygnet scheme which involved the employment of Baltic women. The largest foreign labour scheme was entitled Westward Ho! and initially involved the recruitment of Balts and Ukrainians in the British zones of Germany and Austria. This scheme was later expanded to the recruitment from the British, American and French zones of displaced persons of any nationality, including large numbers of Poles. Other labour schemes were the North

Sea scheme, which brought 10,000 German women to Britain, the Blue Danube scheme which recruited 2,000 Austrian women, and the recruitment of 5,000 Italians of both sexes.⁵ These schemes were all ended in 1950, with the exception of the recruitment of Italian women which continued until March 1951.

The first foreign labour scheme, entitled Balt Cygnet, was introduced in 1946 and involved transporting to Britain women prepared to take employment in hospitals which were in desperate need of more labour. The scheme was then expanded to the recruitment of Balts and Ukrainians as unskilled industrial workers and became known as the Westward Ho! scheme. The first volunteers under the scheme arrived in April 1947. Male displaced persons were also allowed into the country as part of this scheme. Initially Poles were not recruited under this scheme as it was felt necessary to settle the large numbers in the Polish Resettlement Corps first, but as the demand for labour remained unsatisfied displaced Poles also became eligible for EVW status. Up to the end of October 1947 the cost of administering the Westward Ho! scheme had been £780,000, by the end of October 1948 this total figure had risen to £2,750,000.⁶ This represented the cost of selecting of EVWs in Germany and Austria, transporting them to Britain and maintaining them until placed in employment. In addition to being

maintained free of charge in the camps whilst unemployed, the refugees were also given a money allowance of £1 on arrival plus a further five shillings pocket money per week whilst waiting to be placed in employment. Clothing coupons were also issued. Once placed in employment the travelling costs of a refugee to his/her place of employment, if some distance away from the refugee's accommodation, was also borne by the Government. The costs for 1948 also included the costs of approximately 3,000 dependants who had also been brought to Britain.

Provision was made for the possible deportation of any EVWs who proved unsuitable or unsatisfactory workers and undesirable residents in Britain. Deportation would take place to the country from which the refugee had been brought to Britain. However, as will be outlined later, deportation was only used with reluctance against recalcitrant workers and those who adhered to the terms of their employment were allowed to settle permanently in Britain. The permanency of their settlement was recognized by the Minister of Labour and National Service, George Isaacs, in 1948 who stated in the House of Commons:

"This is settlement of a permanent character. These people come here,

working their passage to British citizenship."7

There was some misunderstanding and misapprehension amongst the EVWs about possible time limits being imposed upon their stay in Britain and to counter this the British Government found it necessary to circulate a leaflet in several languages which stated quite clearly that no such time limit existed.

Selection, suitability and security

The displaced persons were interviewed by Ministry of Labour officials whilst in the camps in Europe to assess their industrial suitability. However, the refugees were assessed for general suitability rather than for specific occupations. The volunteers were not told which jobs they would be given until after their arrival in Britain. For example, many former agricultural workers were placed in industrial employment in Britain, whilst many former industrial workers found themselves being employed in agriculture. Industrial workers finding themselves in agriculture often took the first opportunity to leave and to resume industrial employment. Former agricultural workers were less likely to leave industrial employment for farm work on account of the generally higher wages in the industrial sector and, in

addition they had already tended to find themselves comfortable living accommodation.⁸

Selection was carried out mainly on the general suitability for labour but other criteria were also imposed. There were age limits of 50 for men and 40 for women; those intended for the textile industry were not normally accepted if over 35 years old. These age limits were not always strictly adhered to and some EVWs over the age of 50 were allowed into Britain. A general medical examination and an X-ray examination to detect tuberculosis was required of all volunteers for the labour schemes. Unfortunately, medical facilities in Germany were often inadequate for effective screening to take place. The main official concerns about the physical health of the EVWs were tuberculosis, venereal disease and pregnancy. Interviewers were also asked to look for signs of 'good character' as 'bad types' were undesirable as potential long-term settlers. However, all these checks were not enough to ensure that all the workers were a good long-term prospect, as a number who were accepted later showed to have psychological problems which had resulted from their experiences during the Second World War and prolonged residence in the displaced persons camps. There was official concern over the mental health of volunteers but effective screening was not possible in the context of the facilities on offer in

Germany and the short period of time which could be given to the individual screening of each potential EVW. The screening issue was to re-emerge later in the debates on the possible existence of war criminals of East European nationality resident in Britain.

The accommodation problem and the transport shortages led to a preference for accepting onto the labour schemes people without dependants. However, during the first six months of the Westward Ho! labour scheme dependants were allowed into Britain, although families were often resident in different parts of the country. Approximately 1,500 EVWs were admitted with dependants due to follow them as soon as possible⁹ before accommodation difficulties resulted in the decision to limit recruitment to single persons only, which was effective from 1 July 1947.¹⁰ These recruits were required to sign a declaration that they were single and had no dependant relatives.

As far as security screening was concerned, it was assumed that they had already been screened by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and the Control Commission in order to be given displaced person status. Such interviews often involved little more than asking the displaced persons to confirm details about their home town or to show some knowledge of the language

of their claimed country of origin. The large numbers of people who required screening meant that a number of wartime collaborators managed to slip through the net as did still undetected numbers of war criminals. Due to the pressure to allow EVWs into Britain and get them working, by 14 July 1947 16,488 EVWs had arrived in Britain, 8,863 already being in employment,¹¹ further screening was also less than diligent. Arrangements were made in 1950 for individual interviews to be conducted with those who entered Britain in large groups during and after the Second World War, as this had not been possible at the port of arrival due to the large numbers involved. Again, such interviews were not as extensive as originally intended and demanded in some quarters. Concern about the efficiency of security screening continued to be expressed. In April 1950 the Home Secretary, James Chuter Ede, had still been finding it necessary to reassure his colleagues in Parliament that security checks had been carried out on the refugees after questions were raised about the possibility of "saboteurs" amongst the 100,000 EVWs who had been admitted to Britain in the previous five years.¹² Questions of security continued to be expressed throughout the following decades, culminating in the War Crimes Enquiry carried out by Thomas Hetherington and William Chalmers in the 1980s.

Some of the security measures included an element designed to protect the refugees. For example, although refugees were obliged to register their address with the police, this address remained confidential and letters could not be forwarded through this source except on compassionate grounds. In such cases the name and address of the person sending the letter was taken and it was made clear to the refugees that they were under no compulsion to reply. It was hoped that this would cut down on the number of threats which could be sent to the refugees, the mailing of threats being a popular scare tactic of the Communist secret services in Eastern Europe. It was also made clear to worried refugees that no foreign authority had the power to force them to leave Britain, and that any cases where improper pressure was being placed on them to do so should be reported to the police.

Consultations with organized labour

To prevent ill-feeling, particularly with the Trades Union Congress (TUC) which had a great deal of influence over its National Executive Committee,¹³ the Labour Government negotiated the terms of employment of Europeans under the labour schemes with trades unions as well as with employers. Both the British Employers Confederation and the TUC, and later the individual

unions concerned, were consulted. The Government had initially hoped the conditions agreed with reference to the employment of Poles could be extended to include EVWs but the TUC insisted on new negotiations. However, there was little opposition amongst the TUC leadership to the general usage of volunteer labour from the DP camps. It was agreed that rates of pay for the EVWs should be the same as those applying to British workers to prevent a foreign workforce undercutting domestic labour, and they were to be employed only where British labour was unavailable. This had also been the procedure during the war regarding the employment of enemy prisoners of war held in Britain. Promotion prospects for EVWs were severely restricted. In addition, male EVWs employed in jobs usually taken by women were to receive the same, higher, rates of pay that British men would receive in similar employment. The EVWs also received rationed goods equivalent to those allowed British citizens doing the same type of employment. Where necessary the EVWs would also be issued with some second-hand clothing.

The views of the trades unions are difficult to gauge. Although ready to make agreements on a national level with regard to the employment of EVWs, there were often objections expressed on a local level to the use of foreign labour. Stadulis, in a study of contemporary trades union periodicals, found only news notes on the

progress of negotiations between the Ministry of Labour and union representatives in the journals of both the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and the Amalgamated Engineering Union, two unions which held the most openly hostile views on the admission of foreign labour to Britain. The hostility of local NUM branches meant that the recruitment of EVWs into the coalmining industry had to be suspended in July 1948. The textile unions did not provide their own journals. The most outspoken journal on the subject was the 'The Land Worker' of the National Union of Agricultural Workers.¹⁴ The agricultural unions particularly objected to the use of gang labour administered by the county agricultural executives, as these served to undermine the improvements to conditions and wages being sought by regular agricultural workers. The county agricultural executives finally capitulated to this view, which gained ministerial support, and began to move away from the use of gang labour in autumn 1949. Those workers made unemployed involved a high proportion of EVWs.

However, despite the negotiations with the trades unions, resentment from sections of the British population towards the foreign workers did appear, particularly when it was felt that they were taking the jobs of British citizens. In March 1952 Cyril Osborne spoke in the House of Commons that

"there is already fear of redundancy in many industries, and that there will be a great deal of resentment if our own people find themselves out of work while foreigners keep their jobs."¹⁵

However, the Government was satisfied that such a situation would not occur because of a clause in the foreign workers scheme which stated that foreign labour was to be used only when British labour was unavailable. In most industries in which foreign workers had been recruited there was also an agreement with the appropriate union that foreign workers would be the first to go in the event of redundancies. It was the responsibility of the parties involved to decide if such clauses were to be adhered to. In many cases they were not put into operation. For example, when depression hit the textile industry in 1951 the unions did not oppose the employers' policy of putting both British and foreign workers on short time so that redundancies of any kind could be avoided. EVWs who were made redundant were covered by the National Insurance Act and were therefore entitled to use the social services; they also received help from the local employment exchanges to find new employment.

These feelings of job insecurity were expressed against the introduction of foreign labour but were often based

on the experiences of British labour before the Second World War rather than on previous contact with the incoming national groups.

In strong union areas hostility was also expressed at the EVWs' reluctance to become involved in union matters. The TUC were unapproving of EVW attempts to set up their own national groups within the unions, although the Transport and General Workers' Union did actually encourage the formation of such groups within the London area. British workers were also hostile to the EVWs' reluctance to become involved in trades disputes. However, the EVWs had good reason not to become involved as, if the strike was unofficial, they risked deportation. Vocal left-wing elements of the trades union movement were also disapproving of the EVWs' antagonism towards the Soviet Union. However, despite this, in places where foreign labour was introduced hostility towards the EVWs was sometimes reduced as they became known as individuals to their British fellow workers rather than as the threatened mass of cheap foreign labour.

Employment - restrictions on choice

More choice was afforded to the volunteer workers, as civilians, than had been the case with prisoners of war

when being allocated employment. However, jobs did have to be approved by the Ministry of Labour and the industries defined as 'essential' to economic reconstruction had first call on this source of labour. Jobs available to the EVWs were often of a similar type to those done by the prisoners of war whom they replaced as the prisoners were repatriated. Employers wishing to employ foreign labour had to make their application to the local Ministry of Labour office which would allocate a worker to them if British labour proved unavailable. EVWs were asked by the Ministry of Labour to stay in the industry in which they were placed for a period of at least 12 months.

The actual contract of employment was not shown to the refugee until arrival in Britain. In the DP camps on the Continent a leaflet was distributed to all prospective EVWs which stated that recruits would be paid the same wages and be employed under the same conditions as British workers. Recruits to the scheme were then required to sign an undertaking in which they declared their willingness to accept employment found for them by the Government. The contract of employment signed by the refugee upon the commencement of employment in Britain was a separate document. In this contract it was stipulated that deductions would be made from the wages of the refugee to cover social insurance contributions

and similar taxes. These contributions entitled the refugees to use all of the social security benefits available to British citizens should they be required. Briefly, these benefits comprised accident, sickness, unemployment, maternity and widow's benefits, guardian's allowances, retirement pensions and death grants. Special arrangements were made to enable refugee workers who had not been resident in Britain for a sufficient period to still be eligible for sickness and unemployment benefits. This gave the EVWs greater security than was the case in many of the other countries which had been willing to accept them.

Changes in employment within the undermanned industries were allowed but moving from an undermanned essential industry to other employment was not looked upon favourably and was permitted only in exceptional circumstances, for example by moving away from heavy manual labour due to persistent ill health. However, when viewed in the context of similar restrictions on British citizens employed in agriculture and coalmining, which were introduced in 1947, the reluctance to permit changes in occupation amongst EVWs seem less draconian. Nevertheless, it is significant that employment restrictions were more rigorously enforced against EVWs than against the British population.¹⁶

Those EVWs who changed employment without first seeking the permission of the local Ministry of Labour offices could be prosecuted under the Aliens Order, 1920. However, this was resorted to only in particularly serious cases. On a more threatening note to the refugees, they also risked deportation. However this was unlikely if they had transferred into another of the undermanned industries. Again, as with prosecutions, there was a certain amount of reluctance to deport EVWs who had committed only minor offences against employment restrictions, and deportation was usually resorted to only in the case of recalcitrant EVWs who persistently ignored the rules governing their occupational mobility. In the course of events, only 602 of the 91,000 arrivals were deported; 125 up to the end of 1948, 163 during 1949, and 314 in 1950. No deportations were made after the end of the probationary period of EVWs. There were also 3,828 who returned voluntarily although amongst these were a number of bad conduct cases who would otherwise have been deported.¹⁷

Restrictions on the type of employment available to an EVW were maintained for the first three years of residence in Britain, with the exception of EVWs married to British subjects from whom restrictions were lifted in October 1948. The extension of employment restrictions beyond the initial twelve months was much misunderstood

by the EVWs, many of whom, not realising that restrictions could in fact be maintained for an indefinite period of time, had held the belief that restrictions were in operation for the first year only. In particular, it was a source of disquiet amongst those displaced persons whose background had not been one of manual labour and were expecting the opportunity to return to something approximate to their former status after completing a twelve month period of unskilled industrial or agricultural employment. The one year clause had in fact been a safety measure for the British authorities to enable the deportation of any workers not found satisfactory after that initial period. It also appeased those opponents of the scheme who had expressed concern about the large influx of refugees into Britain who, in their view, may prove difficult to integrate into British society.

The Control of Engagement Orders affecting British workers were removed in March 1950 and this, along with external pressure from the International Refugee Organization and the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, paved the way for employment restrictions to be gradually removed from EVWs throughout 1951 and 1952. By January 1953, with the employment restrictions removed, EVWs were reclassified as foreign workers recruited under various employment schemes rather than

being referred under the all-embracing title of 'European Volunteer Workers'. However, despite the freedom of choice of employment now available to former EVWs, existing industrial agreements reached with the trades unions regarding the use of foreign workers were to remain in force throughout the 1950s, which continued to affect the promotion prospects of former EVWs, including moves from unskilled to skilled work, and discriminated against them when redundancies became necessary. Some restrictions were also maintained on older professional EVWs returning to their former occupations. For example, dentists had to undertake a one-year course at London University before being allowed to practise in Britain. Doctors also had to requalify to British standards. However, language and financial difficulties sometimes prevented them from doing so. Other professions, for example lawyers and ex-Army officers, were often unable to achieve their former status and remained in manual or semi-skilled employment.

Statistics - the numbers involved

The number of foreign workers recruited on official schemes were¹⁸ :

1947	37,594	1950	4,728
1948	40,225	1951	2,613
1949	8,661		

The bulk of these workers were from displaced persons' camps and comprised mainly Balts and Ukrainians. Figures given by Paul Foot are 30,000 Ukrainians, 14,000 Poles, 12,000 Latvians and 10,000 Yugoslavs. He does not give an estimate of either Estonians or Lithuanians who also arrived in considerable numbers.¹⁹ After May 1949 the arrivals were restricted to women volunteers. The principal industries and occupations in which these foreign workers were employed were agriculture, coalmining, textiles, brickmaking, domestic service (mainly in hospitals and institutions) and nursing. However, as restrictions on types of employment available to EVWs were lifted there was a marked shift away from some of these jobs into ones with better pay and better conditions. Agriculture suffered particularly badly from shifts in employment.

The breakdown into male and female employment can be seen in the following comparisons of the numbers of first placings of EVWs at 9 September 1950.²⁰ Of the 33,158 women recruited 27 per cent had entered the cotton industry, 22 per cent were domestics in hospitals and similar institutions, 15 per cent had found other domestic employment, 15 per cent were in the woollen industry, and 7 per cent had found employment in nursing. Only 65 women had found employment in agriculture, compared to 29,554, or 52 per cent, of the men. Other major sources of male EVW employment were coalmining (19 per cent), non-hospital domestics (6 per cent), brick and allied industries (5 per cent), and the iron and steel industries (3 per cent). Four per cent of men were also involved in various aspects of the textiles industry (excluding hosiery). In addition to these figures, 919 women and 1,458 men were employed by the National Service Hostels Corporation in maintaining the EVW camps and hostels. However, some occupations fared better than others at retaining EVW employees after the removal of employment restrictions. Domestic employment lost many of its female EVWs, some of whom gave up working after having children. Many EVWs employed in agriculture left at the earliest opportunity, due to better wages and working conditions in other industries, and to move to more densely populated areas in order to escape the isolation they suffered in rural life. Coalmining also

lost a high percentage of EVWs first placed in the industry, a primary cause being the hostility of the local NUM branches to their introduction. On 2 July 1949 there had been 6,966 EVWs on the colliery books, but by the corresponding date in 1955 this number had fallen to 3,998 former EVWs.²¹

The EVWs were generally viewed by employers as very satisfactory employees who were hardworking and conscientious. This was mainly due to the refugees' attitude towards work which was basically to earn as much money as possible in order to obtain some degree of financial security after the deprivations suffered by them during the Second World War. Overtime was particularly attractive to them for this reason. In some cases this led to dislike by their English colleagues who thought them too eager and a threat to working conditions which had been won for them by the trades unions. These feelings of hostility grew worse when threatened with unemployment. Many employers were reluctant to allow EVWs to leave to take jobs elsewhere, but there was little they could do if other employers were offering better conditions and wages. Other EVWs sought employment elsewhere in order to move nearer to relatives employed in other parts of the country. The employers were often disgruntled that the Ministry of Labour allowed such changes in employment of workers who had

been trained and, in some cases provided with accommodation, by their first employers but the Ministry's officials felt there was little they could do to stop such changes in employment without being accused of treating the EVWs as slave labour. 22

Accommodation

The biggest restriction, however, in allowing the displaced persons into Britain was the availability of suitable accommodation. Accommodation was in short supply for the domestic population and the housing of refugees could not be seen to be taking priority. Arthur Horner, general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, actually put forward the view in February 1947 that the building of new houses for foreign workers "while the miners continued to live in slums" as an objection to the use of foreign labour in the pits.²³ There were also problems in finding accommodation for the Poles whose resettlement in Britain had already been agreed and provision for these Poles took precedence over any further influx of refugees. On arrival the EVWs were accommodated in transit camps near the port of arrival before being transferred to one of nine holding camps situated in various parts of the country which were staffed largely by the refugees themselves and could accommodate approximately 10,000 people.²⁴ It was

reported in Parliament on 28 June 1948 that £46,000 capital costs had already been incurred by the Ministry of Works in providing the transit and holding hostels for EVWs.²⁵

After employment had been found for the EVWs they were then moved on to available hostels or private lodgings nearer to their place of work which had been found for them by the Ministry of Labour officials. In 1951 there were still 118 workers' hostels open in Britain, housing not just EVWs but also members of the Polish Resettlement Corps and approximately 17,000 British workers.²⁶ Officials tried, wherever possible, to house married couples in the same hostel and arrange for them to find work in the same district in order to prevent later requests to change employment on account of family separation. Once in employment a charge, initially 30 shillings for men, and 25 shillings for women, was made on the EVWs for food and accommodation. Although EVWs in employment were liable to income tax, hostel charges were exempted from assessment for income tax. Hostel accommodation was meant as a temporary measure only since space was limited and hostel life did little to integrate the refugees into the larger British community.

The hostels and holding camps were lacking in comfort, since the sites were intended as only temporary

residences. Complaints about the conditions within the hostels were forthcoming from both the EVWs themselves and from representatives of visiting organizations such as the Women's Voluntary Service and the International Refugee Organization. Complaints were also made by some EVWs about the behaviour of the hostel managers and their treatment of the refugees. There were also conflicts between hostel residents of differing nationalities. Some improvements were made to conditions but priority remained on transferring the EVWs to private accommodation as soon as possible.

The EVWs were thus restricted to employment in areas where such accommodation was available. To combat this restriction some of the larger employers provided hostel accommodation of their own. Farmers were also encouraged to provide accommodation for any EVW labour they wished to use, and by applying to the Board of Trade they could receive dockets for furniture and linen it was necessary to provide for the EVWs. However, landlords were not always altruistic in their motives and a minority provided sub-standard accommodation and exploited their foreign tenants who were unaccustomed to British money or ways. These welfare concerns were often dealt with in the immediate period after their arrival by the Ministry of Labour's welfare organization, the National Hostels

Corporation, with valuable help being given by various voluntary bodies.

There were three separate hostels set up for the accommodation of dependants of the EVWs who were unable to find private lodgings. In most of these hostels dependants were forced to live separately from the EVW. When families were separated the search to find private accommodation became more pressing. The first of the family hostels to close was in May 1950, the second following in the autumn of 1952. However, 150 dependants were still being housed in the remaining hostel as late as 1956.²⁷ In December 1949 the Refugees' Housing Society was established to raise funds for providing a home for the elderly parents of EVWs who would otherwise have been unable to come to Britain. This home was opened in Wandsworth on 20 March 1951. The association was founded by Harold Ingham and it received aid from the Guide International Service and the British Red Cross Society as well as donations from other sources. The first ten residents of the home were of Estonian, Latvian, Polish and Ukrainian nationality. Relatives of the residents made a contribution towards maintenance. However, the association also appealed for charitable donations. There was also the opening of a hostel for former displaced persons in Britain sponsored by the British Council for Aid to Refugees in June 1951. It

offered accommodation for 59 people, with priority being given to the elderly. The need for such accommodation was illustrated by the oversubscription for places in the home which were made by 1,500 relatives of displaced persons.²⁸

The EVWs moved into private accommodation as soon as any became available. Families often pooled their resources to enable them to purchase properties and as a result this accommodation was often as overcrowded as the hostels. It also resulted in a number of European Volunteer Workers becoming landlords to other displaced persons. During the 1950s some former EVWs moved into council properties, but proportionately fewer than compared to the population as a whole. This was due to both the attitudes of the EVWs who had a strong desire to own their own homes and were prepared to make many sacrifices to do so, and also to the lack of priority assigned to them on council housing waiting lists. By the middle of 1950 approximately 50 per cent of EVWs had found accommodation other than that provided by the hostels,²⁹ by 1956 it has been estimated that little more than 3,000 EVWs and their dependants remained in hostels.³⁰

The Distressed Relatives Scheme

In addition to the labour schemes it is also necessary to consider the Distressed Relatives Scheme. This was in effect forced upon the British Government by the lack of volunteers for EVW schemes who were without dependants. This scheme made it possible for families to be reunited, be it with spouse, children or elderly parents in need of care. Maintenance and accommodation was to be provided by the person already resident in Britain. Briefly, those allowed in when the scheme was announced in Parliament in November 1945 were : wives, husbands unable to support their wives abroad, children under the age of 21 and one daughter over 21 if, otherwise she would be left on her own, as well as females under 21 and males under 18 with no relatives abroad but one in Britain prepared to take them in, and finally elderly parents unable to care for themselves. Those admitted into the country who were capable of working, particularly the young people, came under the condition that they should be allowed to take only that employment approved by the Ministry of Labour. Guarantees of maintenance were required before any visa was granted and such guarantees were checked for their validity. Married EVW couples were also required, from July 1947 onwards, to sign an undertaking agreeing to live separately if work could not be found for them both in the same geographical area.

However, this did not prevent subsequent difficulties when requests were made to transfer employment to a location nearer to that of a spouse, and in cases where EVWs already in Britain became insistent on joining their partners they were allowed to do so without disciplinary measures being taken.

Transport arrangements were the responsibility of those involved rather than the Government.³¹ The costs were to be met by the host already in Britain and the arrangements were to be organized through the Central Office for Refugees, and the transport itself was organized by the British Red Cross which was also to organize reception in Britain. Owing to the limited transport facilities there was often a considerable wait for distressed relatives coming to Britain. To limit the numbers entering Britain and to ease transport difficulties people without dependants were preferred for the Westward Ho! scheme. The backlog of transportation for dependants, in addition to the problems faced in finding suitable accommodation, was responsible for the re-introduction of restricting the EVW schemes to those without dependants in July 1947.

By 30 May 1946 924 people had arrived in Britain under the terms of the Distressed Relatives Scheme and it was known that there were many more on the Continent waiting

for transport.³² By 18 November 1946 the number of people who had arrived in Britain as a result of the Distressed Relatives scheme had increased to 2,525.³³ In May 1951 this total had risen to 3,707 dependants of EVWs.³⁴ Figures given in Parliament breakdown the number of dependants of European Volunteer Workers allowed into Britain into 268 men, 1,696 women and 1,860 children.³⁵ The number admitted to Britain qualifying under criteria outlined in the Distressed Relatives Scheme had risen to 6,500 by October 1956 and, in addition, a further 2,500 had been admitted who had not actually qualified under the terms of the scheme. The Distressed Relatives Scheme remained in operation but in cases of extreme hardship some people who fell outside the terms of the scheme were allowed into Britain.³⁶

Healthcare provisions

The health of the European Volunteer Workers was an important issue since sick EVWs would be unable to undertake the employment for which they had been brought to Britain. Whilst in hostels provided by the National Service Hostels Corporation they were administered by doctors appointed by the Corporation. These doctors were also responsible for supervising the arrangement for general camp hygiene. The greatest problems with the refugees' health were their susceptibility to

tuberculosis and mental disorders as a result of their wartime experiences and the realities of camp and hostel life. To help ease the boredom of camp life, something which the EVWs experienced over a prolonged period, recreational facilities, for example sports and concerts, were arranged.

Initially, a distinction was made between those who were ill or pregnant before they arrived in Britain and those who became so afterwards. Those who were ill or pregnant before arrival were returned to Germany (except pregnant EVWs with husbands already in Britain), those who became so after arrival had provision made for them. They were cared for and maintained by the authorities during periods of sickness or unemployment until they qualified for benefit under the newly created National Health and Unemployment Insurance Schemes. The Government was reluctant to deport many sick EVWs for fear of the bad publicity which would ensue but by mid-March 1948 79 EVWs had been returned to Germany on grounds of ill health. After this time it was decided that all tuberculosis cases should be returned to Germany due to the availability of the appropriate medical facilities there and the shortage of such facilities in Britain, and that those with serious psychological problems should also be returned as it would in their interests to be treated in a country where language difficulties were less of a

problem. It has been estimated that one per cent of the refugees required hospitalization after mental breakdowns, a figure which compares to just 0.34 per cent of the British population as a whole.³⁷ Mental breakdowns were most common amongst EVWs who entered domestic or agricultural work in which they found themselves removed from refugees of their own nationality. All other illnesses, and also pregnancies, were in future to be treated in Britain. Later, as more facilities became available, it was decided that tuberculosis and psychiatric cases should also be treated in Britain.

Whenever EVWs were returned on medical grounds protests were forthcoming from both the refugees' own welfare groups in Britain and also from the International Refugee Organization. It was argued that such returns unsettled other EVWs in Britain who feared for their own security as future residents of Britain should anything happen to prevent them from working. The International Refugee Organization also expressed concern about the reception of sick EVWs in Germany following their return. At best the reception which could be hoped for was one of indifference, and at worst one of hostility, and either way it would be a distressing experience for these sick and disturbed individuals. It was these reactions to the policy of returning sick EVWs combined with international

calls for countries to accept more of the 'hard core' Displaced Persons who had been unable to find resettlement elsewhere due to illness, disability or social and political reasons, which led the British Government to abandon its early policy and agree to treat all sick EVWs in Britain. Initially EVWs with tuberculosis were treated in hospitals which had been set up for the Polish armed forces during the war. This was followed by the establishment of a tuberculosis hospital specifically for EVWs.

Although female EVWs were no longer to face deportation should they become pregnant their treatment by the British authorities still left something to be desired. No plans were made to provide married quarters in the industrial hostels and the situation arose where female EVWs on becoming unemployed after reaching the advanced stages of pregnancy were made to leave the hostels. The MP Ivor Thomas was concerned that these women, thrown out of the industrial hostels and often unable to find lodgings locally, suffered unnecessary hardship. However, the view of the Government remained unchanged; industrial hostels were designed to accommodate transferred industrial workers and were unsuitable for mothers with young children.³⁸ In such cases the Women's Voluntary Service often involved itself trying to make

alternative arrangements for unmarried mothers amongst the EVWs.

Food rations allocated to all EVWs were the same as those for British workers in similar jobs. This did not, however, prevent accusations from some people, including a number of Members of Parliament, for example Albert Stubbs, Major Legge-Bourke and Captain Crookshank in the Commons and Lord Willoughby de Eresby in the Lords, that EVWs rations were in fact higher than those of British workers. This was consistently refuted by the Government but some refused to be reassured.

Language teaching and educational provision

It was also important that the EVWs, only 10 per cent of whom had any knowledge of English on arrival,⁹ mastered sufficient English to be able to work efficiently and classes were arranged for them with the assistance of the local education authorities and various voluntary organizations. The provision of textbooks and other teaching materials in the holding hostels was the responsibility of the local education authorities but the costs to them were reimbursed by the Ministry of Labour. Attendance of English classes for refugees other than those allocated to the pits tended to be voluntary, and were not always undertaken by the EVWs who, being in

full-time employment, often preferred to use their free hours for more leisurely pursuits. In November 1947 a responsibility on the part of the refugee to learn sufficient English was added to the explanatory leaflet outlining the conditions of entry. However, this was not enforced after the EVW had been placed in employment.

EVWs destined for work in the collieries were given a compulsory ten-week language course for safety reasons, knowledge of mining terms being taught in addition to basic general English language. Under the direction of Mr. B. L. Vulliamy, the director of studies to the National Coal Board, 160 intellectuals from amongst the Poles and other foreign volunteers were trained on a 4-5 week course as English teachers and were subsequently used to teach the Poles and EVWs intended for work in the collieries.⁴⁰ After completion of the English language course, a further three weeks were spent training the EVWs in British mining techniques at a Coalmining Training Centre. Whilst undertaking English language and vocational training the EVWs were given an additional allowance by the NCB to supplement that of the Ministry of Labour so that they would remain in the industry.

In some factories the communication problem was partly eased by putting EVWs into the same section to work together and, if possible, placing them under the

supervision of someone who spoke some common language with them, for example a refugee from Central or Eastern Europe who had been resident in Britain for a number of years. In later years, after the removal of employment restrictions, a number of refugees found their promotion prospects hampered by their lack of ability in the English language.

Other educational opportunities for the EVWs were limited. They had come to Britain as foreign labour on two year contracts and any educational activities undertaken by them were by necessity carried out in their spare time. After their two year contracts were at an end a return to full-time education remained unlikely due to their individual financial situations. Throughout 1949 the International Student Service contacted students amongst the EVWs to provide them with information on evening and correspondence courses and to put them in touch with British students. The International Student Service reported that although most EVWs desired to complete their studies the physically strenuous occupations in which they were employed and the overcrowded living conditions of hostel life made study difficult.⁴¹ From December 1949 EVWs under 30 years of age were permitted to undertake a full-time educational course of at least two-years duration after completing at least 18 months of full-time employment. Forty-four

applications were received in the next 18 months, the majority of which were successful.⁴² However, despite few applications being made by former displaced persons for study places, such applications were not always given sympathetic consideration. For example, the students at Liverpool University rejected the admission of a Displaced Person in 1949, stating the British Universities should be for the British.⁴³ However, schemes to offer places to the displaced persons, which involved an annual levy of one shilling per student, were accepted at Oxford, Manchester and Cardiff.⁴⁴

Problems with language also combined to create another form of hostility amongst British workers who disliked their foreign colleagues talking to each other in their own language. Such feelings can also be witnessed against later arrivals to Britain, for example the Asian community. Hostility in some British colleagues also resulted from the EVWs' failure to participate in the general working community, for example by not attending works outings. The EVWs' desire to save as much of their earnings as possible sometimes led to accusations of meanness by those who did not understand the circumstances which had led them to behave in this way.

Some efforts were made to educate EVWs on the British 'way of life'. A general booklet was published in eight

languages by the Central Office of Information which gave information about life in Britain, and this was distributed free to all EVWs. A number of other booklets were also published. The booklets had such titles as To Help You Settle in Britain and Contemporary Life in Britain. These booklets tended to be of a pragmatic nature, outlining information on basics such as British money, weights and measures, rationing and social security. Some EVWs had some practical information, for example how to cash a postal order, included in their English language teaching. The services of the Ministry of Labour's Welfare Officers were also made available to foreign workers in need of advice and assistance. In addition, two bodies were formed to provide further help for refugees settling in Britain. These were the Central Co-ordinating Committee of Refugee Welfare Organizations, formed in 1948, and the British Council for Aid to Refugees, formed in 1950. Public libraries did what they could for the EVWs by providing books in East European languages where there were local East European exile communities.

Preparing an easy reception

The Churches in Britain were very co-operative in the arrangements they made for the reception of the refugees and their relatives. The British Council of Churches

established a Foreign Workers' Committee, and the Catholic Church also had an EVW committee. In addition to co-operating over general aid and welfare arrangements they also co-operated with the national communities when they took moves to establish networks of their own priests. The Foreign Workers' Committee was instrumental in negotiating the release from their employment contracts of EVW priests in order for them to undertake religious duties. Initially Orthodox priests serving the EVWs were given a maintenance and travel allowance by the British Council of Churches but this ended in 1952. However, by this time the refugees were already making provisions for themselves and contributed towards the costs of having their own priests. The Churches in Britain provided the EVWs with contacts as well as with meeting rooms, and in some cases offered the use of the churches for religious services. The Roman Catholic Church was particularly helpful to both the Ukrainian and Polish Catholic communities in this matter.

Other voluntary bodies also aided with the reception of the EVWs. For example, the Young Men's Christian Association and the Young Women's Christian Association welcomed foreign members. However, their success was limited as the refugees often did not accept such invitations to join. The Women's Voluntary Service was also active in aiding the reception of the EVWs. In

addition to the provision of social activities, including arrangements for EVWs to visit British homes, the WVS placed particular emphasis on the welfare requirements of the EVWs. Some International Clubs were also established but these tended to encourage the involvement of the refugees at the expense of British members and thus lost their effectiveness in encouraging integration into the wider community.

After the winding down of the International Refugee Organization in Britain in 1950, a co-ordinating body, the British Council for Aid to Refugees, was formed to oversee the activities of the voluntary agencies. It was governed by representatives of twenty of these agencies and worked closely with the Home Office and the Ministry of Labour. The aim was to aid the resettlement process for all refugees finding residence in Britain. It was also responsible for distributing some funds to refugee national bodies, a task in which it was occasionally criticised by the refugees who did not always agree with the spending priorities of the Council.

The refugees also established their own national organizations, which were often vociferous in calling for an improvement in the treatment and rights of their members, but these organizations had little influence on British officialdom. The national groups also often

established contributory welfare funds which supplemented the sickness and accident benefits paid to needy compatriots. The organizations were strengthened to an extent by working together through the Central Coordinating Committee of Refugee Welfare Organizations which was formed in April 1948, but overall their position was a weak one as they had very little bargaining power. Also, the setting up of national groups and associations by the refugees sometimes hampered their integration into the British community as they preferred instead to socialise with their fellow exiles. Such tendencies are in fact natural but their effect should still be noted. Adjustment was also retarded in some cases by the hope that in the not too distant future after their initial arrival in Britain the political situation in Europe would change in such a way as to make a return home possible. As this hope faded and stronger ties with Britain emerged, for example through intermarriage or children growing up in Britain, more effort was made to adjust to permanent residency.

It was not only the EVWs who needed to be educated about the British. It was decided early on in the scheme that the terms 'Displaced Person' and 'DP' had become derogatory and should be replaced by the neutral 'European Volunteer Worker' or 'EVW'. Newspapers of the time carried numerous articles about the EVWs, many of

which portrayed them in a positive and sympathetic light. However, it was often the articles portraying EVWs in a negative way which received the most publicity. In October 1947 it was also decided by the Government to establish a 'Publicity Committee to educate public opinion on foreign workers'. This committee aimed, by the production in 1948 of a document entitled Workers From Abroad, to project a positive image of both Poles and EVWs and to dispel hostility to their presence in Britain.⁴⁵ The National Coal Board also published a pamphlet entitled European Labour in British Coalmining which was produced to increase the understanding of NCB Labour and Welfare officials who were likely to come into contact with the foreign recruits.

Later arrivals - hardcore DPs

Despite a number of initiatives from many countries to accept the post-war refugees there were some displaced persons who were not thought attractive migrants and were therefore forced to remain in the camps. These were mainly the sick and aged. After the winding up of the International Refugee Organization in 1950 there was a renewed effort to resettle as many people as possible from the displaced persons camps on mainland Europe. In May 1950 Britain agreed to accept 2,000 of these refugees for whom accommodation and maintenance could be provided

by relatives, friends, other private individuals or voluntary organizations. These individuals and organizations were required in turn to take continued responsibility for the refugees admitted on their behalf. The British Council for Aid to Refugees was particularly active in the operation this scheme. By October 1953 the 2,000 places had not been filled and it was decided to admit into Britain up to 700 people from the displaced persons camps for whom continuing guarantees of maintenance and accommodation were forthcoming whether from charitable organizations or private individuals. In August 1954 40 such refugees were admitted to Britain after a fundraising effort by the British Council for Aid to Refugees and the provision by them of a new hostel for their accommodation. However, in June 1959 there were still an estimated 30,000 refugees from the Second World War living in camps across Europe, the vast majority of them being either old or sick.⁴⁶

Re-emigration of EVWs

It has been estimated that by the mid-1950s at least one half of the EVW recruited labour had re-emigrated to the United States or other Commonwealth countries.⁴⁷ However, other estimates are much lower than this.⁴⁸ Some of this re-emigration was caused by fears over job security when the shortage of labour no longer existed.

For example, there were a large number of applications for emigration when the textile industry took a downturn in 1951. However, by 1952 when the threat of unemployment had gone so too did the desire to emigrate leave many of the previous year's applicants.⁴⁹ Few EVWs returned to their own countries. By 11 November 1948 only 1,000 of the numbers recruited and transported to Britain had returned the Continent. Of these, most had returned on compassionate grounds.⁵⁰

Naturalization

For those refugees who were allowed to settle permanently in Britain, and chose not to re-emigrate elsewhere, the prospect of naturalization was opened up to them after the statutory period of five years' residence. Naturalization meant that the refugees would be able to vote in British elections and find foreign travel easier. Although naturalization was perceived by some refugees as an act of disloyalty to their origins, visiting their homeland was fraught with danger if not protected by the rights which would be afforded to them as British nationals. It was necessary for the applicant to obtain declarations of support from four British subjects by birth who were also householders and knew the applicant well. These sponsors were then interviewed. The applicant also had to place notices of the application in

the British press. A fee was also payable by the applicant which, for those former refugees with little disposable income, could be prohibitive. The Home Secretary also consulted police and security service files on the applicant. If, within five years of being naturalized, a person was found guilty of a criminal offence and sentenced to at least 12 months in prison then this person could be deprived of his or her British citizenship. However, such action was not common.

During December 1970 questions were asked in the House of Commons about the position of East European refugees in Britain as affected by proposed changes to the legislation governing naturalization. Bradford MP, John Wilkinson asked that special consideration be given to them on account of their contribution to the British economy, whilst Paul Rose also called for their cases to be looked upon sympathetically as many of them were "in a state of uncertainty and disquiet". The Minister of State for the Home Office, Richard Sharples, replying on behalf of the Government believed that there was no need to make special provisions and any foreign national living in the United Kingdom for five years satisfied the qualifications for naturalization. This clearly covered East European refugees who had arrived in Britain in the immediate post-war years.⁵¹

Restrictions on non-naturalized residents

For those who chose to keep their original nationality rather than applying to become British citizens some restrictions over their behaviour remained.

Travel abroad was more difficult for those who did not seek naturalization, particularly for those who wished to visit their former countries of residence. Although it might have been possible for them to obtain permission to visit countries in the Communist Eastern bloc, the British authorities refused to guarantee their safety once there.

A further restriction on non-naturalized aliens was that they were unable to anglicise or otherwise change their names unless they had received prior permission from the Home Secretary. In January 1947, the then Home Secretary James Chuter Ede stated that he would not grant permission unless both person and name were considered suitable by him.⁵²

Residents of Britain still classified as foreign nationals also remained ineligible to vote in British elections, regardless of the length of the period of continued residence in Britain. In July 1971 Trevor Skeet asked the Government if it would consider amending

the Representation of the People Act, 1949, to give the right to vote in local government elections to aliens who had been resident in Britain for a continuous period of 15 years and "have consistently paid their taxes over the period".⁵³ This suggestion was rejected by the Government.

The message underlying official policy towards foreign nationals resident in Britain seems very much to have been one of an advocacy of the benefits of naturalization for long-term settlers rather than the retention of their own nationality.

7. THE RESPONSES IN BRITAIN TO THE POLISH ARRIVALS OF THE 1940s

The arrival of Poles in Britain during the Second World War

Amongst the first Poles to arrive in Britain as a result of the Second World War were the officials of the Polish Government and throughout the course of the war, the Polish Government-in-exile in London had not only been a symbol of Poland's resistance to Nazism but had also represented to many Poles the continuity of their country as a political state. However, Anthony Eden, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs for most of the Second World War, and the staff at the Foreign Office had become increasingly weary of exiled East European politicians. In 1940 when the Polish forces arrived in Britain, Winston Churchill, then British Prime Minister, had sent a letter of welcome in which he praised the Poles for their "deeds of endurance and valour" for which their nation was "so justly renowned"¹. By 1944 Churchill still had praise for the Polish forces but not for their political leaders.

It was not until after the German occupation of France in June 1940 that large numbers of Poles arrived in Britain. The initial number of Polish forces arriving in Britain

in 1940 was 10,000 but it quickly became tens of thousands. The Polish Army in exile based in Britain, became a recruiting centre for exiled Poles throughout the world. Polish troops in the West numbered over 110,000 and at the end of the Second World War these were gradually transferred to Britain where they were officially demobilised.² Large numbers of these Polish forces, and many members of the government-in-exile, chose to remain in the West, a significant proportion settling in Britain.

This chapter is concerned with the reactions in Britain to the Poles who arrived both as soldiers and civilians to settle in Britain in the years immediately after the end of the Second World War. Official and unofficial attitudes towards the Poles in the spheres of employment, accommodation, education, welfare and as members of the wider community will come under consideration.

The Polish Resettlement Act, 1947

Initially the British Government sought to encourage as many Poles as possible to return to Poland or, rather than settle in Britain, to emigrate elsewhere. Although it was recognised that there was a short-term labour shortage in Britain, it was feared that Polish exiles would represent permanent rather than temporary additions to

the population. However, it soon became apparent that large numbers of Poles were unwilling to return to a Poland under the leadership of a Communist Government and, after the unsettled and migratory nature of their wartime experiences, large numbers were also reluctant to re-emigrate after being stationed in Britain or demobilized there.

In March 1947 the Polish Resettlement Act was introduced. The Act covered all Poles who had arrived in Britain as a result of the Second World War, whether as part of the forces or as civilians. The spirit of this Act prevented discrimination against the settlement of Poles in Britain on grounds of age, sex, health, or marital status. It also outlined provisions for Poles regarding resettlement, emigration, accommodation, health, welfare, employment and education. During its passage through Parliament the Polish Resettlement Bill had gained popular support but had been vehemently opposed by the two Communist Party MPs, Philip Piratin and William Gallacher.

The Polish Resettlement Corps (PRC) was also established to facilitate the orderly release of the Polish forces primarily into the British workforce, but also into British society as a whole. The PRC was dealt with administratively as part of the British army but it was

not a military organization. However, it did provide a temporary stumbling block to Anglo-Polish relations as the Polish Government threatened that enrolment into the PRC could result in a loss of Polish citizenship as under Polish law this was the consequence of membership of a foreign military organization. This threat was aimed chiefly at officers who enrolled in the PRC, rather than the rank and file who it was still hoped could be persuaded to return to Poland. However, by the end of 1948 only 8,700 PRC members had been repatriated.³ The wives and children in Poland of officers who lost their own Polish citizenship retained their own citizenship but facilities were made available for them to leave the country if they wished. The Polish Government also expressed concern that Polish officers hostile to the new Polish state would hold influential positions within the Corps.

Members of the PRC were paid an allowance by the British Government, the extent of the allowance being dependent on both rank and family status.

PRC members were liable to British taxation. They were also subject to British military discipline. This resolved the situation whereby the Polish forces under British command had ceased legally to be under the discipline of the exiled Polish military forces without

being under British military jurisdiction, a situation which had occurred as a result of the statement of the Polish Government in Warsaw that the exiled Polish forces could no longer be considered to be part of the forces of the new Polish state. Members of the PRC were given instruction in the English language and were also provided with practical information on life in Britain.

The Government also created the Central Polish Resettlement Office in April 1947 which was to provide information and advice on a number of subjects, in particular emigration and legal problems relating to previous life in Poland, for example, marriage and property concerns.

The arrival of dependants of the Polish forces in Britain

After the decision had been made to allow members of the Polish Armed Forces to settle in Britain, one obvious consequence was that the wives and families of these men should also be allowed into the country. Polish families who did not qualify for entry to Britain were those where the head of the family had not served under British command. This included the relatives of men killed in Poland in 1939 and 1940, and those men who had died in captivity in the Soviet Union prior to 1941. However, the British Government stated that it did

"fully recognise the desirability of re-uniting Polish families, whether here or in Poland or elsewhere overseas, and [was] making constant efforts to this end."⁴

From the end of the Second World War in Europe to January 1949 approximately 30,000 relatives of Polish servicemen eventually settled in Britain,⁵ arriving in Britain not just from Europe but also from India and East Africa where they had accompanied the Polish forces during the course of the Second World War. Later arrivals amounted to approximately 2,600 dependants.⁶

European Volunteer Workers

Initially, due to the primary concern that the PRC be absorbed into the British economy and fearing a saturation point of Polish refugees in Britain had been reached, Poles were not encouraged as EVWs but, as it became clear that enough workers from other countries would not be recruited under the scheme, there was a shift in policy which led to the entry into Britain of Polish EVWs. Female Polish workers were encouraged in their choice of Britain as a resettlement destination by the presence of the PRC which represented potential Polish husbands in Britain. In addition to the PRC and their families, a further 9,094 Polish men and 4,538

Polish women entered Britain as part of the European Volunteer Workers scheme, bringing with them 99 dependants. There were also a total of 12,893 Polish-Ukrainians who entered Britain as part of this scheme.⁷

The numbers involved in Polish resettlement in Britain

Calculating the extent of the Polish resettlement in Britain after the Second World War is complicated by the various ways in which it is possible to define the number of Poles resident in Britain. Census figures include Poles who arrived in Britain before the Second World War whilst omitting those of Polish descent born in the British Isles. However, the Polish community when assessing its own numbers tends to include those of Polish descent whilst omitting a large proportion of pre-war refugees, many of whom were Jewish and have involved themselves in the Jewish rather than Polish community. Census figures will also include large numbers of Ukrainians who claimed pre-1939 Polish nationality in order to avoid post-war repatriation to the Soviet Union but are not ethnic Poles and have their own Ukrainian community organizations. In assessing the numbers of Poles in Britain it is important to be aware of such anomalies.

According to the Census of 1931 there was a Polish community in England and Wales numbering 43,604, with an estimated 10.3 per cent of them Christian Poles, the remainder Jewish.⁸ At the end of the Second World War over 150,000 Poles settled permanently in England and Wales and a further 7-8,000 in Scotland, the majority of whom were Roman Catholic. Patterson, using both Home Office 1951 census figures for aliens and naturalisation and information contained in Polish community sources, estimates that there were between 130-135,000 Poles living in Britain in 1960.⁹ These figures include Poles who had taken British citizenship and people of Polish descent (estimated at 16-18,000). It excludes most Polish Jews and Ukrainians and the small number of Poles who had cut themselves off from the Polish community. The 1961 Census actually gave the number of Polish-born residents of the United Kingdom as 136,502, in 1971 the number had fallen to 108,000, reflecting the age structure of the Polish exiles in Britain and the small number of later additions. In Britain in 1971 of all Polish nationals resident in Britain 17.9 per cent were aged 65 and over.¹⁰

Not all the Poles who arrived in Britain after the end of the Second World War remained in the country. Some eventually chose repatriation, whilst others decided to emigrate elsewhere. Many Poles felt betrayed by the

Western Allies over the agreements made at Yalta with the Soviet Union concerning the future of Poland. Those Poles who chose not to remain in Britain emigrated to countries other than their homeland. In the first five years after the end of the Second World War approximately 10,000 Poles emigrated from Britain to other countries.¹¹ An estimated 11 per cent of the Poles arriving in Britain after the end of the Second World War eventually emigrated elsewhere.¹² The total of Polish emigrants from Britain amounted to more than 33,000 between 1946 and 1950.¹³ Both repatriation and emigration schemes were aided by the British Government. Financial aid to emigrate was provided for under Section 7 of the Polish Resettlement Act 1947. Members of the PRC and their families were provided with free transport if they chose to be repatriated or emigration elsewhere. Poles in Britain applying for emigration before 31 December 1950 were aided in making emigration arrangements, both financial and otherwise, by the British Government sponsored Polish Emigration Scheme. Between 1 December 1949 and 30 November 1950 1,138 Poles, including 639 men, 324 women and 175 children received assistance to emigrate, with an average cost of £65 per head. The most popular destinations were the United States, Canada, and Australia, in that order.¹⁴ Assistance from the British Government was available to those Poles who had obtained visas up to the end of September 1951, after which date

the offer was withdrawn. In addition, small numbers of aged Poles with no family in Britain did return to Poland during the 1960s in order to die in their homeland.¹⁵

There was also a small number of deportations. Poles were not deported to their own country and as a result the deportation orders were often not enforced as it was difficult to find another country to accept them.

The acquisition of British citizenship

For those Poles who remained in Britain the issue of naturalization was likely to arise. Naturalization was certainly thought of by the British authorities as a desirable first stage in the process of assimilation. Already by February 1945 the question of naturalization for Poles in Britain, particularly those with British wives, was being raised in Parliament. However, at this time Herbert Morrison, Secretary of State for Home Affairs and Minister of Home Security, maintained that there were a number of different nationalities serving the Allied cause in Britain and he did not see why the Poles should be singled out for preferential treatment.¹⁶ John McGovern responded to this by saying that Britain had a "special obligation" to the Poles and

"in view of the gross betrayal of Poland at the present moment, should not these people get special treatment ?" 17

There were also attempts in February 1947 to attach a clause to the Polish Resettlement Bill which would have allowed the Poles who had served in Polish units under British command during the Second World War to have their period of service included as part of the compulsory five year residence requirement, as was the case with foreign nationals who had served in British units. However, this move was defeated in Parliament. The Poles did not receive any special treatment as regards naturalization but, in common with other foreign nationals, after five years' continuous residence in Britain they were allowed to apply to become British citizens. This residential requirement meant that it was some time after the Second World War that the bulk of Poles in Britain could apply for naturalization. Various schemes involving group naturalization of Poles were proposed. However, these never received enough official support to be put into operation. One reason for this reluctance was the belief that it might encourage permanent settlement in Britain when emigration and repatriation were still being encouraged. It was also feared that special treatment for one group would encourage other groups to seek similar treatment. During

1946 1,008 Poles applied for naturalization, 933 in 1947 and 2,053 in the first ten months of 1948.¹⁸ Up to 31 March 1951 7,978 Poles passing through the Polish Resettlement Corps had applied for naturalization, 4,850 of whom were granted certificates.¹⁹ Between 1946 and 1961 33,431 Poles resident in Britain were naturalized.²⁰

Initially naturalization was perceived by the Polish community as an act of disloyalty to Poland but, as it became clear that the establishment of an independent Poland was going to take some time, a number of Poles eventually decided to take British nationality. This became particularly true after Polish families had established themselves in Britain and succeeding generations were more British than Polish and therefore unlikely to return even if it were possible. It was also true of the many Poles who married British women. The advantages of British citizenship would give the Poles greater job security and job prospects, in that they would cease to be treated as foreigners in the event of redundancies or promotion opportunities. In the cases of those waiting for public housing British citizenship meant that they were not kept at the back of the waiting list. It also made a return journey to Poland possible, refugee travel papers being invalid for foreign travel to the country of birth. There was an increasing recognition within the Polish community that members

might have practical reasons for adopting British citizenship without changing their loyalties to Poland, and consequently as time progressed less heed was taken of the Polish Government-in-Exile's demands that Poles should contact them for permission to apply for British citizenship. However, even as naturalized British citizens it was not unknown for Poles returning to Poland to face arrest and imprisonment.²¹

The naturalization of Poles did not really gather momentum until the 1960s when the permanency of settlement was coming to be recognised by even those Poles who were most optimistic about an eventual return to their homeland. In 1967 2,368 Poles, only 330 of whom were women, were granted British citizenship. The numbers declined thereafter.²² The naturalization process involved obtaining the signatures of four British citizens who were householders, had known the applicant for at least four years and were prepared to vouch for the good character of the applicant. This requirement was a further reason why those Poles who had integrated more into the British community were the most common types of applicants from amongst the Polish community.

Employment

The first major impact of the Poles on the British public was in the field of employment. During the Second World War this was dictated by military requirements. After 1945 the situation became more complex as Poles competed with the indigenous workforce, and Polish displaced persons augmented the Polish forces already being demobilized in Britain and seeking civilian employment. The attitudes of the Government and Labour Exchange officials, employers and trades unions all played a vital role in forming the occupational structure of Poles who resettled in Britain. Our first major theme in this section is to discuss the activities of the Polish Resettlement Corps.

The Polish Resettlement Corps

In 1946 the Polish authorities in Warsaw ceased to recognize as Polish those Polish military units still based in the West and it was subsequently decided by the British Cabinet Polish Forces Committee that these units should be disbanded as speedily as possible, with demobilization of the men taking place in Britain. The Polish Resettlement Corps (PRC) was then established by the British Government to facilitate the absorption of the Poles into the British community, and more

importantly from the Government's point of view, into the workforce. The Poles' potential use as a workforce in a post-war Britain in dire need of extra labour sources was one of the principal factors behind the decision of the British Government to allow such large numbers to settle permanently in Britain. In recognition of their value as a potential workforce vocational training was made available to PRC members, although their enrolment in such training was not to be at the expense of British ex-servicemen who also wished to enrol in vocational training centres. The employment of Polish ex-servicemen was given a higher priority than the employment of displaced persons and former prisoners-of-war, although the first priority remained the employment of British ex-servicemen.

Enrolment into the PRC began on 11 September 1946 and, whilst enrolment was voluntary, until May 1947, those Poles who refused to join were threatened by the British Government with deportation to Germany. Simultaneously, those who did enrol in the PRC were threatened with the loss of their nationality by the Polish Government. Poles classed as invalids in need of long-term treatment were not accepted into the PRC, and were not penalised for their lack of membership. By the end of 1949 114,000 Poles had enrolled in the PRC, 91,400 of whom had decided to stay in Britain.²³ Polish women who had

served in the Forces were also eligible to join the PRC, approximately 5,000 of them passing through in total.²⁴ Initially the period of service in the PRC was two years, with relegation to the reserve once employment had been secured. This period was reduced to one year for members enrolling after March 1948. There was also a separate branch of the PRC for those who had served in the Polish Air Force, approximately 12,000 Poles passing through this organization.²⁵

The initial rates of enrolment were not matched by the time taken for Poles to be successfully found employment. By 25 November only 342 of the 25,171 enrolled PRC members had been found work.²⁶ However, this situation improved greatly during the course of 1947. On finding employment members of the PRC were placed on reserve until their two year enrolment period was completed; they were then discharged.

Those who refused both repatriation or enrolment into the PRC risked the possibility of deportation to Germany, the view being taken by the British Government that "these Poles cannot remain on British benevolence indefinitely".²⁷ A small number of deportations did actually take place, with 105 Polish recalcitrants returned to Germany, all of these deportations occurring before 16 June 1947.²⁸ The recalcitrants who were not

deported created an image of being 'spivs', an image which reflected badly against the whole Polish community in Britain. After the cessation of deportation, in April 1948 the Government introduced measures whereby 'persistent refusers', that is men who had refused four or more reasonable offers of employment, could be compulsorily discharged from the PRC, after which it was the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour to find employment for them. Members of the PRC who persistently refused offers of work were reported to an Anglo-Polish tribunal and, if the refusals were considered as unreasonable by the tribunal, the Pole was then discharged from the Corps and lost the benefits of its membership, including the right to draw military rates of pay. Up to 25 January 1949 only four compulsory discharges had been necessary, the other men reported to the tribunal having withdrawn their objections to the employment offered to them. After discharge the Poles was then liable to be directed to employment under the same terms as British subjects.²⁹ Approximately 8,000 Poles were discharged from the Polish Forces without joining the PRC.³⁰

Some sections of the Press and public complained that there were Poles in the PRC who consistently refused offers of employment and preferred instead to live in idleness at the expense of the British taxpayer. There

was criticism of the high level of payment of members of the PRC compared to their potential earnings as civilians. In particular, concern was expressed that members of the PRC were in receipt of higher rates of military pay than British men of equivalent rank and obtained better treatment and benefits than British ex-servicemen. This complaint was heard with increasing frequency from the last months of 1948 onwards, when the PRC contained a high proportion of officers amongst its ranks. Such accusations were always vigorously denied by the British Government. In fact, rates of pay in the Polish Resettlement Corps were between two-thirds and three-quarters of the pay of a British soldier of equivalent rank.

However, the general image of large numbers of idle Poles content to live at the British taxpayers' expense was a misrepresentation of the vast majority of the Polish Resettlement Corps. In September 1947 there were only 16 men who refused offers of employment, in October the number was just ten.³¹ One possible reason for these accusations might have been misunderstandings arising from the nature of the PRC which itself had to employ a considerable number of Poles in its administration; this was particularly true of Polish officers and is one reason why there was a high proportion of higher ranks remaining in the later stages of the PRC.

By 22 June 1948 67,000 members of the PRC had been placed in employment. A large number of the members who remained unemployed were either elderly and/or disabled.³² Approximately 1,300 members of the PRC were registered as disabled, 4.7 per cent of the total, and approximately 10 per cent of members were over 50 years of age.³³ However, every effort continued to be made to place these people in suitable employment.

After 12 March 1948 the period of service for those enrolling into the PRC was reduced to one year. There was no further enrolment into the Corps during 1949.

Towards the end of 1948 discontent was growing amongst sections of the British community over the number of Poles still in the PRC, who had not found civilian employment. On 25 November 1948 there were 14,965 remaining members of the PRC, 650 of whom were women.³⁴ A number of calls were made for the winding up of the Resettlement Corps. This was done on 30 September 1949, although members of the PRC whose term of service had not expired on that date were allowed to receive ex-gratia payments equivalent to their PRC pay until either finding employment, emigrating or being repatriated, or until the expiry of their term of service, whichever was the sooner. Initially 2,049 Poles were in receipt of these payments, this number having been reduced to 240 by 4

April 1950.³⁵ Of those Poles remaining in the PRC at the time of its disbandment, a number were war disabled and had restricted employment opportunities. Figures given in August 1949 stated that 350 were totally unfit, 250 were working in Remploy and sheltered industries, whilst 1,500 were partially handicapped but available for normal work.³⁶ The ex-gratia payments ended in July 1950 and all those Poles who had been members of the PRC who had been capable and available for work had been absorbed into the working population or, if unable to support themselves, were being maintained by the National Assistance Board at the same rate as British subjects. Total Government expenditure on the Corps between 1945 and 1950 was £122,320,000.³⁷

Final figures for the PRC showed that 80,000 Poles had been repatriated without joining the PRC, whilst 8,000 were repatriated after joining. Nearly 10,000 had emigrated. The Ministry of Labour had placed nearly 68,000 in British industry, 10,000 had been discharged without being placed and 3,000 had died. In addition, there were 2,000 members of the PRC whose contracts had not expired and who continued to be paid ex-gratia payments.³⁸

For Poles who had been members of the Air Force rather than the Army, the Polish Air Force Association helped to

find them civilian employment if they chose to remain in Britain. It also provided help for those wishing to emigrate.

The general attitude of the trades unions towards Polish employment in Britain

In the establishment of the PRC, the Government had sought and gained the acceptance of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress (TUC). The TUC General Council, at a special meeting held in May 1946, agreed to the employment of Poles in Britain, provided that certain conditions were met. These were : close consultation with the individual unions directly involved; Poles would be employed only when and where British labour was unavailable; any training given to the Poles would not be better than that provided for British ex-servicemen; Poles' wages should be comparable with those of British workers in similar employment thus ensuring that Poles were not to be used as a source of cheap labour pricing British workers out of the labour market. With some of the individual unions , for example the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), there was a further agreement that in the case of redundancies Poles would be the first to lose their jobs. The decision of the General Council to approve the use of Polish labour was the subject of heated debate at the 1946 TUC Congress, one of the main

objections was the accusation from some sections that the Poles were fascist sympathisers. However, these delegates failed in their attempts to have the decision reversed.

By 25 November 1947 agreements had been reached in 40 industries concerning the employment of Poles within those industries.³⁹ The Iron and Steel Trades Confederation had agreed to the employment of Poles by December 1946. Also by this date the National Union of Railwaymen agreed to the temporary employment of 1,000 PRC members in London railway depots to deal with Christmas parcels. These agreements did not stop certain trades unions later taking unilateral action to hinder the introduction of Poles into their industries. Such restrictions were pursued for example, by the Amalgamated Engineering Union and branches of the NUM.⁴⁰ Objections were also maintained on a smaller scale, for example, the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers was responsible for the dismissal of ten Polish carpenters from a building site near Portsmouth in October 1947.⁴¹ Hostility to the Poles from pro-Soviet groups was most in evidence in employment where trades unions provided obstacles to the employment of Poles. Those individuals and organizations who were hostile to the trades union movement seized on such developments to mount economic and political criticisms of the trades unions' responses. In

Parliament, the industrialist and Conservative MP, Sidney Shephard blamed the attitude of the unions for high levels of unemployment amongst the Poles at a time when there remained vacancies in the undermanned industries. However, the Ministry of Labour Parliamentary Secretary, Ness Edwards, replied:

"I think the emphasis should be laid on the other side, that is, that Poles cannot live in this country without contributing something to its economy."⁴²

Polish enrolment into the trades unions was to be encouraged, including in industries where closed shops were not in operation. The two largest unions in Britain had a very positive attitude towards Polish membership. The Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) actively recruited Poles from resettlement camps from 1947 onwards. By 1949 three all-Polish branches were in existence, with a combined membership of 6,000.⁴³ There were also Polish members amongst other branches of the TGWU. The TGWU offered its Polish members legal advice, representation when dealing with local offices of the Ministry of Labour and, between 1947-1950 English language lessons. In 1943 the General and Municipal Workers' Union had established links with the Union of Polish Workers and Craftsmen in Great Britain which had

been founded in 1940 and this co-operation continued during the period of resettlement. By January 1951 the Union of Polish Workers and Craftsmen in Great Britain had 78 branches with a total of approximately 9,500 members.⁴⁴

Other professional associations were formed by the Poles who felt more comfortable in their own trade associations than in British trades unions, for example, the Institute of Polish Engineers in Great Britain which in January 1953 had 680 members. There was also a Polish Farmers' and Agricultural Workers' Union in Great Britain which in January 1953 had 2,000 members.⁴⁵ Such bodies had predecessors such as the Association of Polish Lawyers in Great Britain which was formed in August 1940 by lawyers who had accompanied the Polish Government-in-exile to Britain after the fall of France to the Nazis. The later trades and crafts unions established by the Polish community helped some members to find work more easily and also helped the Poles to overcome some of their distrust for such organizations. However, the formation and membership of Polish trades unions and associations was generally discouraged by the trades union movement and there was also opposition in some parliamentary circles. It was believed that integration into the British community would be achieved more rapidly if the Poles identified themselves with fellow British

workers rather than accentuating nationality differences in the workplace.

Also of note when considering the attitudes of the trades unions to Polish workers, is the policy of the National Union of Railwaymen which responded to the positive attitude of Polish workers in public transport by awarding honorary citizenship status within the union to those with long service, thereby protecting them against redundancy where foreign workers were the first to go.

By 27 July 1949 Minister of State Hector McNeil felt able to comment in Parliament on the "excellent relations which now exist between Polish and British workers here."⁴⁶ In many instances hostility and opposition to Polish workers had been overcome after British workers had come into contact with the Poles and began to view them more as colleagues than as competitors.

The position of Polish European Volunteer Workers

There were Poles not only in the Resettlement Corps but also amongst the European Volunteer Workers who came to Britain to alleviate manpower shortages. The idea of using liberated Poles to provide badly needed manpower in Britain was floated in Parliament on 8 May 1945 when Thelma Cazalet Keir proposed that their labour be used on

the land or in the rebuilding programme rather than that of German and Italian prisoners-of-war. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Anderson, replied on behalf of the Government that the Poles were being cared for and, where possible, being provided with employment by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, and that in addition other opportunities for using the skills of these people were being investigated.⁴⁷ As has previously been noted, there was subsequently a change in policy which resulted in the recruitment of Poles as part of the EVW scheme.⁴⁸

The occupational structure of the Poles in Britain after the Second World War

The majority of Poles settling in Britain initially entered the British economy at a low level as unskilled workers regardless of their previous education and occupation in Poland. The Poles were generally directed to sectors of the labour markets which were found unattractive by the indigenous population on account of poor wage rates, lack of job security or the need for heavy physical labour. Such employment included : agricultural work, mining, brickmaking, domestic work, the hotel and catering trades, textiles, the construction industry and the iron and steel industry. The Poles were obliged to stay in these types of employment for several

years until employment restrictions eased, any hostility of the local population and unions had reduced significantly and until their English language skills had developed sufficiently to enable them to be able to take better jobs. For many professionally qualified Poles age restrictions prevented them from ever reaching their former professional status after finding exile in Britain.

As far as members of the Polish Resettlement Corps were concerned, the principal industries into which they were absorbed between 1947-50 were⁴⁹:

A. Manual Workers	
Agriculture	8,200
Building	9,000
Brick-making	3,100
Coal-mining	7,300
Civil engineering	3,000
Domestic service	1,300
Food manufacturing	1,500
Hotels, catering	6,200
Iron and steel	2,500
General engineering	3,500
Textiles	6,400
Miscellaneous	<u>14,000</u>
TOTAL	66,000

B. Non-manual workers	
Local Government	1,000
National Government	
Service	1,000
Professional Services	2,000
Students	2,000
Miscellaneous non-	
manual, including	
business on own	
account	<u>8,000</u>
TOTAL	14,000

The above figures reflect the priorities given to Polish employment in various industries by the British Government. However, members of the PRC, unlike European Volunteer Workers, were not subject to any direction of

labour other than that which applied to British workers. Restrictions on the employment of Poles ceased when the Control of Engagement Order was removed from the British population.

Changes in employment arranged after leaving the PRC are not included in the above figures. For example, in 1951 there were reported to be 1,800 Poles employed by British Railways.⁵⁰

Agricultural employment

The British Government was particularly keen to place Polish workers in agriculture. In 1939 training was already in progress for the Jewish refugees who had fled to Britain from Poland, and then, later in the war, there was extensive use of prisoner of war labour in agriculture. After the war had ended this source of labour gradually diminished as prisoners and refugees were repatriated or emigrated elsewhere, and the Poles, once their long-term resettlement in Britain had been accepted, provided an obvious replacement source. However, there were only 6,300 former farmers and landowners and 2,500 agricultural workers of all kinds amongst the members of the Polish Resettlement Corps.⁵¹

There were also some objections raised by the National Union of Agricultural Workers (NUAW). They argued that the hours and wages structure of agricultural employment compared badly with urban employment, and thereby acted as a deterrent to the recruitment of British workers, and that these should be reformed. It also complained about the lack of accommodation for rural workers. Negotiations proceeded between the Ministry of Agriculture and the NUAW but an agreement on the terms of Polish agricultural employment could not be reached with the result that in September 1946 the Government put the Poles to work on gathering the harvest without total union approval.

Initially many Poles in agricultural employment were used in gang labour but they were dispersed when possible; the Government was itself against the general principle of using Polish gang labour, on account of its intention to remove them from any quasi-military forms of control. For their part, the Poles also had financial reasons for moving away from gang labour; gang labourers received only their PRC pay, whilst farmers paid the full rate of pay to the Government.

Polish employment in coalmining

Coalmining was another industry targeted by the Government for the use of Polish labour. Initially in February 1946 a number of Polish miners were used in British pits in an attempt to prevent factories from having to reduce working hours due to a lack of fuel. However, it was recognized that union approval and co-operation for the permanent employment of Poles in the industry was a necessary requirement; any unapproved introduction of Poles into the pits would almost certainly result in industrial action, a development which the Government was not prepared to risk.

At this time the National Union of Mineworkers was negotiating with the Government for the implementation of the "Miners' Charter" which called for the introduction of a five-day week plus improved amenities and working conditions, and the NUM insisted that these proposals be accepted as a condition of tolerating Polish labour in the pits. The NUM commanded much sympathy for its anxiety that the employment of Poles should not adversely affect conditions for British miners, but simultaneously it was felt that they should not use the situation to obtain concessions for themselves or to embarrass the Government. Concern was also expressed that if the labour shortage was not resolved by the use of foreign

labour there would be a resultant coal shortage which would affect other industries and therefore the pace of economic recovery.⁵²

The NUM Executive after talks with TUC officials eventually agreed in January 1947 that Poles would be allowed to work in the pits provided that the affected local miners' branch agreed, the Poles joined the NUM, and were the first to go should any redundancies be necessary. When this decision was made only 170 Poles were immediately available for underground work, with a further 226 available shortly; the Poles' greatest contribution towards resolving the fuel crisis of January and February 1947 was in working on the roads and railways rather than in the pits.

Will Lawther, the President of the NUM, told a press conference that the reason so few Poles were suitable for mining was because of language difficulties and there were few skilled miners amongst them. This was not strictly true. The opposition was such, however, that by the end of July 1947 there were 2,288 Poles employed in the mining industry but 1,000 others who had been sufficiently trained and had accommodation waiting for them were still unable to enter the industry because of opposition from local miners' lodges at the pits in which they had been allocated employment.⁵³ At this time 301

branches of the NUM had rejected proposals to place Polish miners in local pits.⁵⁴ This was despite attempts by the NEC to persuade local lodges to accept the men and an overall labour shortage in the mines of 100,000 men.

In August 1947 the NEC tried to resolve the matter by recommending that an official should be appointed to each area for three months to deal with the placement of Poles in the industry. Proposals that the Poles should be allowed to work in pits without British employees were rejected by both Government and Union. However, the NEC initiatives were largely ineffective in eradicating local-based opposition, which continued to receive widespread publicity in the national Press.

Sections of the community hostile to the Poles frequently made the accusation that the Poles remaining in Britain were fascist sympathisers. This was taken one stage further by some of NUM branch leaders who claimed that their union was actively screening Poles before allowing them into the industry. This was denied by the Government.⁵⁵ Opponents of the NUM used the branch objections to claim proof that the union was dominated by Communists. This was also denied by the Government; the Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, Ness Edwards, himself once a miner, stated that the objections

were the result of "local misunderstandings not political discrimination".⁵⁶

Meanwhile, the National Coal Board, which had been assigned control of the recently nationalized coalmining industry, placed recruitment advertisements in the Polish language press in the hope that employment difficulties would be overcome.

The result of the tensions between the National Coal Board and the National Union of Mineworkers was to restrict the number of Poles entering into coalmining and to create a reluctance by Poles to enter into an industry in which they felt unwelcome. However, the Poles who did become miners were gradually accepted by their British colleagues despite a resistance towards foreign labour which remained ingrained in the NUM and was to be demonstrated once again when the use of Hungarian refugee labour in the pits was proposed in 1956.

Polish employment in the textile industry

The textile industry was also identified as a priority in the economic recovery of post-Second World War Britain, since it was a rich source of foreign currency through its export trade. The textile industries were particularly receptive to the use of Polish women workers

as most of the jobs available were traditionally thought of as suitable for women rather than men. In February 1947 it was estimated that there were approximately 50,000 jobs available in the British textile industry.⁵⁷ The conditions of Polish employment set out by the various textile trades unions were those typical of unions in other industries: Polish labour was to be paid the same wages as British workers, Poles were to be employed only when British labour was unavailable, and Polish workers were to be the first to be dismissed in the event of redundancies. It was recognized that the chief difficulty in the employment of Poles in the textile industry was in securing sufficient accommodation in the areas where jobs were available. As a result, workers were placed in the textile industry at a slower rate than employers would have liked and many employers were obliged to arrange accommodation before being provided with foreign workers.

Other employment

Initially a number of Poles were also employed by the Government. The Interim Treasury Committee for Polish Questions recruited a number of Poles who had previously worked in some capacity for the Polish Government-in-Exile. After its establishment the Polish Resettlement Corps, in addition to finding its members work, also

became a major employer of Poles. Poles who worked for the PRC were used for both administrative and domestic work in the camps and hostels. However, these were not permanent jobs and as the majority of Poles settled into civilian life in Britain and the PRC wound up its activities, its employees had to seek alternative employment.

Early agreements were reached with the gas industry and in building and civil engineering regarding the employment of ex-members of the Polish forces. Agreement was also reached with the Iron and Steel Confederation, which was reported in December 1946 to be advocating the employment of Poles in its industries, in contrast to the National Union of Mineworkers which at that time was refusing to accept Polish labour in the pits.⁵⁸ However, the National Council of the Amalgamated Union of Foundry Workers opposed Polish labour, pressing the Government to repatriate them, whilst at the same time arguing in favour of the importation of Italian labour to help break down the bottleneck in production.

Less important in numerical terms than those Poles in agriculture, coalmining and the textile industries, were those who had entered the engineering and shipbuilding industries. Nevertheless, a great deal of publicity was generated by the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers

(AUEW) when in July 1947 it decided that Polish labour should be withdrawn from the industry. At that time there were 4,500 Poles employed in this line of work, fewer than 2,000 of whom were AUEW members. The AUEW objected to the Poles' employment on the grounds that no prior consultation with the union had taken place and that British labour was in fact available for the work which was on offer. However, those British men supposedly available lived in different areas from their potential areas of employment and were unwilling to move to take these jobs. The decision to suspend Poles from the union was influenced by the strength of Communist Party support at all levels of the AUEW, the Communist Party view being that Poles should be repatriated as they were most needed in the reconstruction of Poland and that there was no reason for them to stay in exile. The AUEW stated that those Poles who had already joined the union would be entitled to a full refund of their union subscription fees. The Ministry of Labour, aware of the need for increased production in the engineering industry, particularly of mining machinery and electrical plant, tried to negotiate a settlement with the AUEW but this proved impossible. In consequence the Ministry decided that, if requested by the employer, Poles should continue to be placed in the industry without union approval. After 1949 the AUEW relaxed its opposition to the Poles who in the meantime had been taking employment

in the industry and joining relevant trades unions other than the AUEW.

At the same time as the AUEW dispute, in August 1947 there was the sacking of ten Polish carpenters in Portsmouth as a result of local trade union action by members of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers. This incident was reported in the Daily Mirror, which commented on the pettiness of the action in light of the housing shortage, the building contractor's agent having calculated that one prospective tenant each week would be deprived of a house. F. Wolstencroft, the general secretary of the society, was quoted as saying that the union executive had decided that they would not allow Poles to become members of the union and that their members were not to work with non-unionists. The union justified its actions by stating that British ex-servicemen had been allowed into the union, and that if Poles were also accepted there was the possibility of too many carpenters existing in the future.⁵⁹

The AUEW was joined by another member of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, the Amalgamated Union of Foundry Workers in its opposition to Poles entering the industry. The executive of the AUFW objected on the grounds of protecting the jobs and conditions of British workers. Political objections,

referring to the Poles as reactionary were also raised. However, amongst the rank and file membership of the AUFW there was much less opposition to the Poles.⁶⁰ This is an interesting reversal of attitudes towards Polish labour expressed by the National Union of Mineworkers, where opposition came from the branch membership with the union executive being in favour of their employment.

In some industries limits were set on the number of Poles to be employed in any one firm. For example, the National Union of Blast Furnacemen agreed to the employment of Poles in the iron smelting industry on the condition that the total number of Poles in any one firm should not exceed 5 per cent of the total workforce, and that Poles employed in any plant should not exceed 10 per cent of the total workforce.⁶¹

After the relaxation of employment restrictions on foreign workers and the releasing of the Poles from the contracts of employment they had undertaken as part of either the PRC or EVW schemes, many Poles began to move to lighter, more skilled employment when the opportunity arose.

An immediate return to former professions was not possible for a large proportion of the professionally-trained Poles. They would have found it necessary to

requalify according to British standards. The Government also established a number of courses for both the professional classes and ex-professional army officers to enable them to retrain for other skills. By February 1949 8,369 Polish ex-officers had enrolled in these schemes.⁶² However, the resettlement into civilian life of the ex-professional officers proved problematic; many were over 50 years old and found it difficult to adapt to change, also many were unwilling to lose status and position, they hoped for administrative and executive posts which were not available to them. For some of the older Poles requalifying and retraining was not an option as they had neither the time nor sufficient fluency in the English language to retrain and they were therefore forced to remain at a lower level in the British economy than that to which they had been accustomed in Poland. The fate of these men was described as a "tragedy" by The Times.⁶³ In December 1948 it was estimated that 71 per cent of the Poles in Britain, excluding those who had arrived as European Volunteer Workers, were employed on work of a lower grade to that which they were qualified for.⁶⁴ However, although many of the older Poles never regained their previous occupational status they often encouraged their children to be successful academically and thus on entering employment achieve a return to the higher economic level which had been held by their parents before leaving Poland.

Resuming their previous occupations appears to have been easier for doctors, dentists and engineers than for those in the legal profession. Polish doctors were able to register for practice in Britain without having to sit British examinations, whilst provisions were made at the Brighton technical college for Polish pharmacists to undertake a course familiarizing them with differences in the practice of pharmacy in Britain and Poland. By 1958 there were approximately 600 Polish doctors registered, 80 dentists and up to 2,000 engineers and technicians whilst there were only 36 Poles in the legal profession, mainly based in London.⁶⁵

For young architects the situation of having to requalify had been eased by the opening in 1942 of the Polish Architectural School in Liverpool. The situation for Polish academics was fair; by 1960 there were approximately 50 Poles on the academic staff at British universities and other institutes of higher education.⁶⁶ Refresher courses lasting nine months in educational methods and the English language were available for Polish teachers.

It was not uncommon for Poles who had mastered the language but still had no occupational qualifications to set up their own small businesses. The Union of Polish Merchants and Industrialists in Britain annual directory

for 1960 listed 2,500 Polish businesses, 75 per cent of which were based in London. However, by 1976 this figure had been reduced as their owners died, retired or been forced to close the business, although those which had continued to function had often become larger and more prosperous establishments.⁶⁷ One type of business often set up by Poles in areas of Polish and East European settlement were Polish food stores. The existence of such shops helped the exiled communities to maintain some of the cultural aspects of their daily life.

The employment of Polish women

The principal occupations of Polish women were in domestic service, hospitals and textiles. Their entrance into domestic and hospital work was despite the fact that official sources had initially regarded Polish peasant women to be below the standards of cleanliness required for such work and to have a tendency to 'drift into undesirable ways of life'.⁶⁸ Once the women had started their work these views proved to be unfounded prejudices. Patterson estimates that by 1961 only about 40 per cent of Polish women in Britain remained in employment,⁶⁹ the other 60 per cent choosing not to work because their husbands had sufficient income to support the whole family.

General conclusions on employment

Attitudes towards the employment of Poles in Britain after the Second World War were generally dependent on whether consideration was being made from the side of the employers or the employees. The Government and employers sought a resolution to the labour shortage which threatened Britain's export drive and reconstruction programme. To them the Poles represented an important addition to the potential workforce. However, employees were more concerned with safeguarding their own position and feared the use of foreign labour as a means of undercutting wages and conditions. In light of the recent economic experiences of the 1930s these fears appeared particularly relevant and, at a time when trades unions had significant influence in a number of industries, played an important part in the placing of Poles in employment and the reception given to them by their British colleagues.

The Geographical distribution of Poles in Britain

When the Polish forces first arrived in Britain the majority of them were stationed in Scotland to build defences and guard maritime approaches. A number of these Poles settled in Scotland after the war and were joined by their families in the 1940s. In 1951 there

were 9,250 Polish residents in Scotland, although not all of them were exiles who had remained in Britain after the Second World War. By 1976 this figure had dwindled to 4,000.⁷⁰ However, the bulk of Poles stationed in Scotland during the war moved south to settle in England after 1945 where jobs were more plentiful. Within England there was also a shift in the areas of settlement as most of the Poles who had been sent to work in agriculture left the countryside to find work in the towns once the employment restrictions had been removed. Not surprisingly the towns which seemed most attractive to the Poles were ones where there was already a local Polish community in existence. Approximately 30-35,000 Poles settled in London, 4-5,000 each in Birmingham and Manchester, 3,000 in Bradford and between 1,500-3,000 each in Wolverhampton, Leeds, Nottingham, Sheffield, Coventry, Leicester and Slough.⁷¹ Out of necessity the Poles initially tended to buy cheap houses in the central areas of these cities but would move to the suburbs when it became financially possible to do so.

Polish camps and hostels

After the Second World War had ended Polish Resettlement Corps camps and European Volunteer Worker hostels were established to provide accommodation for Polish and European arrivals to Britain. These were widely

scattered across England. Initially there were ex-army camps situated in rural areas but later camps were established where Polish labour was in most demand. In 1947, as more hostels were made available to Poles, the National Assistance Board and the National Service Hostels Corporation assumed responsibility for their administration, a task which had previously been carried out by the War Office. These hostels were not intended to provide permanent accommodation for the refugees, indeed in some cases they were nothing more than Nissen huts previously used as temporary accommodation for forces stationed in Britain, but were meant as a means of delaying competition with the indigenous population. However, even camp accommodation could be envied by desperate British families seeking homes. In August 1946 a deserted army camp in Buckinghamshire was taken over by British ex-servicemen and their families after hearing it was to be used by the wives of Polish soldiers. The 30 local families who moved into the camp stated that they would refuse to vacate the camp until housing was found for them.

As a consequence of their not being intended for long-term residence, conditions at the hostels were sometimes of a poor standard and there was a great deal of overcrowding. Conditions were often better in industrial hostels also inhabited by British residents. In 1947 the

nominal area of space assigned to each man in the hostels was increased from 45 to 66 square feet.⁷² The camps and hostels were also often poorly furnished and difficult to heat. At one camp at Fairfield near Prestwick in Scotland 380 Polish servicemen and their wives awaiting repatriation found conditions in their camp to be of such a poor standard, combined with the delay in their return to Poland, that in February 1947 they felt it necessary to stage a hunger strike.

Discipline in the camps and hostels was not always easily maintained and there were a number of examples of the behaviour of the Poles causing friction with the local population, for example there was a case in Caithness when Poles from a nearby camp were found guilty of the theft of goods worth £100 from a local store.⁷³ Cases of disorder within the camps were also common. One attempt to encourage more discipline was the formation of Residents' Councils and Committees within the camps, encouraging the Poles to take more responsibility for their lives and behaviour.

The hostels also provided refugees with the opportunity to ease gradually into British life. After discharge from the PRC, Poles and their families were allowed to remain in the hostels until suitable private accommodation was available but they had to make a

contribution towards their board and lodgings in the hostel. If they desired they were allowed to cater for themselves and were issued with ration books.

Although some did continue to live in the hostels for several years after they had gained employment, the majority of Poles began to look for private accommodation. During the 1950s the hostels were gradually emptied and closed down throughout the country; on 13 December 1949 there were 27 hostels housing 14,164 civilian Poles in Britain administered by the National Assistance Board.⁷⁴ Figures for the end of 1950 estimate that 9,500 Poles living in National Assistance Board hostels were feeding themselves, whilst 4,750 continued to live communally. It was further estimated that among the residents were 4,000 children, 2,000 of whom were under five years of age.⁷⁵ By 31 January 1957 this figure had been reduced to 15 hostels accommodating just under 6,000 Poles⁷⁶ and by 1959 only three Polish hostels remained. After 1959 the closure of Polish hostels continued until just one remained at Ilford Park in Devon. In some areas, as a temporary measure, Polish family hostels were converted into "housing estates" but these too were eventually dismantled to encourage integration with the wider community. In some areas local authorities were asked to take over Polish camps

and hostels where there was accommodation space available which could be used by local people.

Ilford Park

As mentioned above, not all Poles left the hostels and near Newton Abbot in Devon the last Polish settlement in the country still remains. Ilford Park was originally used as an American hospital during the war but in 1947 was taken over as one of the camps used to accommodate the relatives of Polish soldiers provided for in the Polish Resettlement Act. Most people left the camp to start a new life in Britain but some Poles, widows, orphans, invalids, and others who were simply unable to cope with life in a strange country, refused to leave. For those who had been most seriously disturbed by their experiences during the Second World War it was possible to feel less of a stranger inside the camp than outside it.

The 38-acre camp originally housed 600 refugees and in 1990 128 people still lived there. The average age of the inhabitants of the camp in 1990 was 82, some of whom had lived there since 12 July 1948, others arrived after their own homes were closed.⁷⁷ Many of the residents chose to enter the home after their health began to fail and had no family in Britain to care for them. In 1987

there were only three married couples in residence at Ilford Park.⁷⁸ There is a waiting list of elderly Poles who wish to become residents of the camp. Most of the residents prefer to live at Ilford Park rather than return to Poland because they originated from parts of Eastern Poland which were incorporated into other territories in 1945.

Unlike early camp life, all residents now have their own room. Some of the residents never learned English and others are finding their grasp of the language deteriorating. The camp contains a library of hundreds of Polish books and receives copies of the daily Polish language newspaper printed in London. The camp also contains a hut which is used as a Roman Catholic church. Many of the people resident at Ilford Park Polish Home still live very much in the past, having never become members of the wider community in Britain and even within the camp many residents participate little in community life and prefer to remain alone in their rooms. Perhaps the most visible reminder of the way in which many cannot come to terms with their past experiences is the way in which some still take bread from the tables at meal times and hoard it in their rooms, unable to forget seeing their compatriots starve to death during the war.

In 1987 the Department of Social Security undertook a review of Ilford Park, owing to a decline in the number of residents and the deterioration of the buildings. Assurances were made that nothing would be done to the camp without consultation and nobody would be forced to leave the premises. In 1990 the Department planned, subject to Treasury approval, to sell some of the land at the site and demolish the old buildings but promised to build a new home for those pensioners who wanted to continue to be part of a Polish community.

Private accommodation

For the vast majority of Poles who did seek accommodation outside the hostels, the first stage for many was to find private lodgings. Rented accommodation of this sort was expensive and after the turmoil of the war many Poles had a strong desire to own their own homes again, many of them eventually becoming homeowners and some even became small-scale landlords. In many cases lodgers, often fellow Poles, were taken in by houseowners as a necessity to make the repayments on the house. The Polish Yearbook for 1958-9 estimated that there were at least 6,000 Poles owning their own homes, a figure which Patterson believed to have increased threefold by the mid-1970s.⁷⁹ As more Poles were able to buy their own

houses the number of families in multiple occupation gradually declined. There was some resentment by sections of the British community at the success of Poles at becoming homeowners but these people were usually unaware of the financial sacrifices made by Poles in other matters so that they could afford to buy their homes.

The residential areas chosen by Poles were often influenced by the proximity to Polish facilities, for example the church or a social club, and convenience for travelling to work. As a result Poles were often to be found in one or two particular areas of the town or city in which they had settled. However, the Poles remained residentially mobile moving to better areas and more expensive housing whenever possible.

The role of religion in the Polish community

The Church played an important role in maintaining the identity of the Polish community in Britain. Many cities had their own Polish Catholic parishes. In 1941 there was already a Polish Church in London. In 1952 there were 113 Polish Roman Catholic priests practising in Britain.⁸⁰ By 1984 there were still 73 Polish parishes in England and Wales.⁸¹ The Church provided a meeting place for Poles and Mass continued to be celebrated in

the Polish form and so provided an outlet to express feelings of 'Polishness'. The English Roman Catholic churches allowed the Poles to use their buildings at times inconvenient for the British congregation, for example Sunday lunchtime. Religious organizations could also provide practical help for Poles in Britain, for example the Catholic Council for Polish Welfare, which was formed in July 1946 for the welfare of Poles both in Britain and in Poland.

The Roman Catholicism of the Poles was unpopular in the staunchly Protestant areas of Scotland where prejudices against 'Papists' were often still in existence. This kind of reaction was much less common in England, and in December 1942 the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales appointed a special day of suffering and prayer for the suffering of the Polish nation. In 1944 the Anglo-Polish Catholic Association was created which was similar in character to the Anglo-Polish Society but with the added religious element. In common with the Anglo-Polish Society the influence of the Anglo-Polish Catholic Association began to decline as the nature of Polish settlement in Britain became long-term and Poles concentrated on establishing themselves economically. Also, within the émigré community an emphasis was placed on a strong sense of nationalism which it was felt was necessary to avoid disintegration. As a consequence the

Poles were keen to avoid duo-national organizations which hinted at assimilation.

For administrative purposes the Polish priests, having been attached to the Polish forces, were able to undertake membership of the Polish Resettlement Corps. As members of the PRC they were guaranteed an income for two years. After this period they relied on parishioners' contributions and, in some cases, had to undertake manual employment in order to support themselves.

In the 1931 Census there were 44,462 people resident in Britain whose place of birth was Poland,⁸² the majority of these being Jewish refugees. The number of Polish Jews in Britain would have been added to, although not greatly, by the arrival of refugees during and after the Second World War.

In addition to Polish Catholics and Jews there were also a number of Lutherans and Orthodox. In 1952 there were an estimated 2,200 Polish Lutherans in Britain, of whom 1,500 had been contacted by the four Polish Lutheran pastors active in the country.⁸³ The Polish Evangelical Lutheran Church in Exile remained basically independent but in 1955 sought association with the Lutheran World Federation and from 1 January 1960 became more closely

involved with the Lutheran Church of England. There were also an estimated 10,000 Orthodox Poles in Britain, the majority of whom had been contacted by their twelve active priests.⁸⁴

The only statistics relating to the religious composition of the Polish community in Britain are those from 1948 which only represent members of the PRC. However, these figures do appear to reflect the religious composition of those Poles who remained active within the Polish community, rather than transferring their allegiance to the Ukrainian or Jewish communities in Britain. In the PRC in 1948 86 per cent of the 102,200 members were Roman Catholic, over 4 per cent Orthodox, over 4 per cent Protestant, under 4 per cent Greek Catholic, nearly 2 per cent Jewish.⁸⁵ Compared to the pre-war population in Poland Roman Catholics were over represented, and Greek Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish under-represented.

Polish community organizations in Britain after the Second World War

To maintain ties of nationality the Poles who settled in Britain formed a number of associations, for example groups were formed for Polish ex-servicemen, Polish women etc. Many Polish associations affiliated to the Federation of Poles in Great Britain. The largest of

these associations, the Association of Polish Ex-Combatants (Stowarzyszenie Polskich Kombatantow, abbreviated to SPK) was formed in 1946 initially being organized whilst the majority of Poles were still resident in the resettlement camps. In July 1949 this association had 9,300 members, which by July 1953 had increased to 14,600 members, both male and female, in 197 local branches.⁸⁶ The association offered its members 'consular' services, financial and legal assistance, help in finding accommodation and employment, a library containing items in both English and Polish, and social opportunities at over 100 of its clubs throughout Britain.

For some Poles these organizations were particularly important, providing both practical support systems and a sense of security and community. For example, some Poles were bonded by their shared experience as Soviet prisoners of war, either as political prisoners or as civilian detainees, and some further still by their isolation as members of the Polish Second Corps (or 'Anders Army') during the war in Palestine and Italy. When the Anders Army had arrived in Britain in mid-1946 the majority of its members could not speak English and knew very little about British people and their way of life. Like many other Poles they were also politically embittered towards the USSR.

The organizations were also important for many of the older Poles who had been unable to requalify in order to take up their former professions in Britain. These men often compensated for their loss of status due to economic circumstances by becoming leading figures within the Polish exile community, being amongst its most active members.

The Poles who had fought in the Second World War were highly organised in setting up their national associations and some felt embarrassed by the Poles who arrived as European Volunteer Workers. The EVWs had come to terms less with being uprooted and as a result were often a more volatile grouping than Poles who had been stationed in Britain or been part of other Western fighting forces during the war. However, this was only a temporary situation as the EVWs eventually settled down to life in Britain and in the provinces became part of the new Polish community.

Polish newspapers

Soon after their arrival in Britain during the Second World War, the Poles had established numerous newspapers and journals, published in the Polish language, which were designed to maintain a sense of national identity during the temporary exile enforced upon them by the

circumstances of the war. During the Second World War the Polish newspapers and periodicals were supported by public funds but when these were withdrawn in 1945 the number of publications declined.⁸⁷ After 1945 the newspapers became less military in character and were aimed at a more general market. They also provided an important service for Poles seeking the whereabouts of relatives with whom they had lost contact through the course of the Second World War. The majority of articles continued to be in Polish, although during the 1950s Polish recipes were often printed in English when requested by Polish men who had married British women.⁸⁸

Political activity of Poles in Britain

In addition to religion, community association and the Polish language, an interest in the political situation in Poland remained of vital importance to Poles in exile.

During their period as members of the PRC Poles were subject to British military law which forbade them from undertaking any activity which could be deemed as 'political'. However, the organizations soon took on a quasi-political character and maintained an interest in political and religious events and the general situation in Poland. Such interest was generated not just through their Polish nationality but also in many cases by the

existence of family remaining in Poland. Numerous demonstrations and protests against the Soviet Union were organized.

The political aspect of the existence of a large Polish community in Britain hostile to the Communist domination of Eastern Europe remained of some concern to the authorities in Poland who viewed the exiles as an embarrassment. The Polish secret services made a number of attempts to contact the Polish exiles and try to persuade them to return home; a returning exile could be used for propaganda purposes. In some cases personal contact was made but it was more common for the refugees to receive pamphlets and appeals which portrayed life in Poland as good and that there was no reason for any Pole to be exiled elsewhere. In June 1951 thirteen of these secret service agents were identified in Britain and deportation orders were served on them. Poles were instructed to inform the police if any such approaches were made towards them.⁸⁹

The issue of responsibility for the Katyn massacre did not disappear.⁹⁰ In April 1956 the Federation of Poles in Great Britain organized a screening of a Polish film about Katyn which was withdrawn by the British Council only hours before it was due to be shown on the grounds that it had never allowed political films to be shown in

its cinema. In September 1979 the British Government allowed a band from the British Armed Forces to attend a ceremony for the third anniversary of the unveiling of the Katyn Memorial in Hounslow. This was the first time that there was to be any official participation from the British authorities. However, the Foreign Office pointed out that this did not imply that the British Government attributed the massacre to the Soviet forces.

Following the death of Polish exile leader General Sikorski in July 1943 the British Government stated that after the Second World War his body would be returned to Poland for reburial. He was then buried in the Royal Air Force cemetery at Newark in Nottinghamshire, as were other prominent Polish exiles. The burial was meant to be temporary but after the Communist takeover of Poland it was decided to be against Sikorski's wishes that he be returned to an undemocratic Poland. To exiled Poles throughout the world this was symbolic of Poland's continued loss of freedom under the terms of the post-Second World War settlement. However, in March 1981 it was made public that the British Government were considering moves from the Polish Government for the return of Sikorski's remains to Poland. The Polish community in Britain objected on the grounds that Poland was still under Communist domination and the remains should not be returned until Poland was a free country.

In this they obtained much support, for example from a number of MPs, intellectuals and the Press. The Government finally refused the request in June 1981, on the advice of the Foreign Office and after intense lobbying against the removal of the remains. To have returned the remains to Poland would not only have offended many Polish exiles throughout the world but would have also presented the Polish Government with a propaganda coup at a time of internal troubles. The remains were eventually returned, amidst great publicity, on 14 September 1993 at the request of the democratic Polish Government. The service in Britain was attended by 1,500 Polish ex-servicemen resident in Britain, demonstrating the strength of feeling which still existed over this issue. There were no serious objections to the reburial at this time, although some Poles did express the sentiment that it would have been better if Sikorski had remained with his men who remained, dead and alive, in Britain. There also remained some suspicion that the reburial was being used for propaganda purposes in the build-up to a Polish election which eventually saw the return to power of the former Communists.

Healthcare provisions

The general healthcare of the Poles, like other residents of Great Britain, was provided for after 1946 by the

National Health Service. However, some aspects of the health of refugee groups in Britain required further attention.

In common with the other groups of post-Second World War refugees settling in Britain there was a significant proportion whose wartime experiences had left both physical and psychological marks. In addition to those disabled by the war, the long years of deprivation had left some Poles, particularly amongst the former displaced persons used as forced labour by the Germans, in poor health; for example, there was concern about the incidence of tuberculosis amongst EVWs. Invalid homes and training centres were established for Polish ex-servicemen. A maternity home was established at Rugby for pregnant Poles.

Other Poles had been left psychologically disturbed, and some resorted to suicide or alcoholism. Poles and other East European refugees with psychological problems and resident in the South of England were referred to the Mabledon Unit which came under the Dartford district health authority. However, East Europeans throughout Britain became eligible for referral as the unit achieved recognition for its specialized care for such groups, who had proved difficult to cater for locally because of language difficulties.

The Association of Friends of Polish Patients also assisted in maintaining Poles with psychiatric problems. It began sending Christmas presents to Poles in psychiatric hospitals in 1954, arranged a number of visits to them throughout the year and provided them with pocket money to make small purchases. In 1958 this organization estimated that there were 1,500 Poles undergoing psychiatric treatment in England and Wales. In 1958 the Association decided to increase its activities to raise funds to equip a hostel to act as a halfway house for Poles discharged from hospital but still in need of a communal environment.

English language acquisition

The acquisition of the English language was vital in reducing the isolation of the Polish community in Britain and in facilitating its integration within the population.

During the Second World War there had been a number of initiatives to teach English to the Poles stationed in Britain. In July 1940 the Lord Provost of Glasgow appointed 100 instructors of English for the large numbers of Poles stationed in Scotland. The cost of these instructors was met by the British Council. The Polish National Council in London had also recommended

that special courses in English culture and history should be made available to Poles. It has been estimated that 40 per cent of the Polish Resettlement Corps had some knowledge of English, whilst only 10 per cent of EVWs (of all nationalities) had.⁹¹ In order to facilitate successful integration, the acquisition of the English language became a priority once permanent resettlement in Britain had become a likely option for large numbers of Poles. The long term use of interpreters was impractical.

The British authorities provided English language lessons for one hour per day for those Poles in the PRC who were awaiting employment, and this teaching was often supplemented by the Poles who found teachers amongst their own ranks. The teaching methods used in these English classes were not always those most suited to the task. In some cases there was an imbalance between teaching English through the use of English literature and the actual basics required by the Poles.⁹² In many cases, although trained teachers, the English instructors were not actually trained to teach English as a foreign language, there being a shortage of people trained in this at the time. Poles intended for work in the mines were provided with English language tuition by the National Coal Board. In coalmining the acquisition of

sufficient language skills were thought to be particularly necessary for reasons of safety.

However, on settling in Britain the Poles had been placed in employment as quickly as possible and opportunities for instruction in the English language were restricted to what was thought the minimum necessary to make an efficient workforce. The types of employment in which they were placed, for example working with heavy, noisy machinery, also discouraged much conversation at work. Where Poles had married another member of the Polish community, Polish also continued to be the language used in the home. Resistance to English classes was heightened by the initial hopes held by most Poles that a return to Poland would be possible within a few years. Learning English was also difficult for elderly Poles and those who had received little education in Poland.

For those Poles who did continue to learn English in their own time there were a number of correspondence courses available and lessons were broadcast by the BBC with an accompanying booklet English by Radio.

For Poles resident in accommodation provided by the National Assistance Board English language classes were organized by the Committee for the Education of Poles in Great Britain. Recreational classes and activities were

also organized in the hostels along with talks from various organizations about the British 'way of life'. Also on the theme of the English way of life, the British Government produced a booklet entitled To Help You Settle in Britain which aimed to give some description of this. There were also numerous articles in the Polish press which aimed to familiarize Poles with British ways and customs.

Those Poles who were adept at learning English found that it could be of great value in increasing their employment opportunities. Many who learnt English particularly well moved to semi-skilled white collar jobs once the employment restrictions had been lifted. Others found that a sound grasp of the language enabled them to be promoted to more responsible jobs in the firms in which they worked. Some Poles also took this further by using anglicized versions of their names whilst in the workplace to make pronunciation easier for their English colleagues. This was particularly true of the young Poles who generally found the transition to English life much easier.

In the special schools set up for the education of Polish children in Britain where it was unfeasible for them to attend British schools there was a shift after 1947 towards teaching in the English language rather than in

Polish as it became necessary to equip the children for adult life in either Britain or other English-speaking countries to which emigration was still possible. The curriculum was also altered to more closely resemble that followed in British schools. Consequently, the Polish teachers in these schools were encouraged to sit for examinations such as the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English or to submit to inspection in order to appraise their ability to teach subjects in English. Once this had been proved there was an addition to their salary.

It was also attempted to teach pre-school Polish children sufficient English. Initially full-time nursery schools were open to children aged between two and five years whose mothers were in employment. However, in November 1950 the Committee for the Education of Poles in Great Britain decided that part-time nursery schools should be made available for children of these ages living in Polish communities regardless of whether the mother was in employment. Local residents were encouraged by the Women's Voluntary Service and Women's Institutes to go and talk to these children in English.

Education provision for Polish schoolchildren in Britain

In Scotland Polish secondary schools for both boys and girls were opened before the end of the Second World War. The schools for Polish children in which lessons were given in Polish were closed when it became apparent that many Poles were facing long-term settlement in Britain. In 1949, before the closures, there had been 50 nursery and primary schools with 2,300 pupils and 7 secondary schools with 2,000 pupils in Britain where Polish children were taught in their own language.⁹³ It was believed by the Government that the children of Poles would benefit more from the early integration with the British community which could be attained by attending British schools. The last two primary schools for Polish children in National Assistance Board hostels, which were situated in Gloucestershire and Leicestershire, were closed by the Ministry of Education in September 1962. The pupils of these schools were transferred to local British schools.

Children of Polish parents became most apparent in British schools during the late 1950s and 1960s. Before this the children had tended to be those born outside Britain and accompanying their parents when they settled in Britain. During the late 1950s/early 1960s there were more children starting school who had been born after

their parents had settled in Britain. The Poles were most evident in the Roman Catholic schools since the majority of the Polish community were members of the Roman Catholic Church.

In some of the towns and cities where there were large Polish communities the Poles themselves established voluntary Polish Saturday schools to which parents could send their children to learn about their language, culture and history.

Facilities for higher education

Facilities for the higher education of Poles in certain subjects were also established. In 1941 the Polish School of Medicine at the University of Edinburgh was founded and this was followed by courses for Polish veterinary students. There was also a Polish Faculty of Law at Oxford University in 1944, architecture courses for Polish students in Liverpool, and in London courses were made available at the Board of Technical Studies which had close links with London University. The Polish government-in-exile encouraged members of the Polish forces to study and was generous in granting extended leave from military service to do so. However, after it became apparent that Polish resettlement in Britain was to take on a more permanent character support from public

funds for the Faculty of Law at Oxford was removed in October 1946. The Polish Faculty of Medicine at Edinburgh University was obliged to continue under its own auspices after the end of the Second World War as Edinburgh University withdrew its hospitality under pressure to find accommodation for its own students. The Polish School of Medicine, as it was renamed, continued until March 1949 enabling those student already enrolled to finish their courses. During the eight years of medical courses being on offer to Polish students in Edinburgh 227 students qualified as doctors.⁹⁴

Educational opportunities remained open for Poles enrolling in the PRC. Poles in British education who decided not to join the Polish Resettlement Corps ceased to be eligible for special educational facilities, including English language courses. This was done on the assumption that Poles not joining the PRC had chosen not to be resettled either in Britain or elsewhere and that such courses, particularly those in the English language, were made available with resettlement in mind.

In December 1946 the number of Polish students in higher education in Britain had been reduced from 4,000 to 2,800, of whom 1,200 were based in London, including 650 at the Polish University College which had been established during 1946 with faculties of architecture,

economics and engineering. The number of students at the Polish University College was not to exceed 1,350. Indeed, after its peak of 1,100 students in its first year,⁹⁵ numbers at the Polish University College gradually declined. No new students were accepted after 1950, the college closing in 1953. Students in architecture and engineering who had not completed their degree courses were transferred at this date to polytechnics in London. At the same time as figures were set concerning the numbers attending the Polish University college, the number of Poles attending undergraduate courses at British universities was limited to 2,000. A number of Polish institutions which provided technical education also existed.

The Treasury paid for the fees and maintenance of students eligible as a consequence of PRC membership and either one year's service under British military command or having completed one year's service in an industry of national importance as a civilian. Phil Piratin, Communist Member for Mile End, deplored the idea that these Polish students were taking places which could otherwise be allocated to British ex-servicemen. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hugh Dalton, informed him that this was a mistaken idea and that the Poles were not preventing any British ex-servicemen from entering higher education, that many of these Polish students had fought

bravely for the Allies during the Second World War and that he was "astonished to find racial prejudice in this matter".⁹⁶ However, the concern that the British public might be resentful if large numbers of Poles were seen to be taking places at British universities at the expense of British students, was one reason for the limitations introduced to the numbers of Polish students at the Polish University College. The numbers were to be gradually reduced as the Poles found places for themselves at British institutions. Under the terms of the 1947 Polish Resettlement Act responsibility for Polish education in Britain was transferred to the Ministry of Education from the Polish Government-in-Exile.

The Polish institutions were only temporary and closed during the 1950s as Poles entering higher education increasingly did so via the British higher education system.

Technical education

In addition to attending their own educational institutions the Poles were entitled to attend British institutions which had places available. However, in November 1945 the Ministry of Education informed the technical colleges that no further admissions should be

made to members of the Polish Forces wishing to attend day classes. The reasons given for this decision were that responsibility for providing educational facilities for the forces rested with the service to which they belonged, and also that resources for day classes at technical colleges were now in full use providing for the normal training needs of industry and special training for demobilized British personnel.

The government aided the further education of young Poles between 1947-1960 by making grants available for those interested in higher or technical education. By November 1948 approximately 27,000 Polish students were in receipt of maintenance allowances from British Government money.⁹⁷ Members of the Polish Resettlement Corps were eligible for a Vocational Training Scheme place if their training would not prevent the training of a British subject and if the industry concerned had agreed to the absorption of Polish workers. In 1948 the offer was made to officers in the PRC of six months' leave with pay in order to attend a training course which would lead to resettlement in civilian life. Arrangements for joining such courses were the responsibility of the individuals involved. By 15 June 1948 there were 357 Polish officers who had taken advantage of this offer.⁹⁸

The organization of the education of Poles in Great Britain

On 1 April 1947 the Committee for the Education of Poles in Great Britain was established to aid in the educational arrangements for Poles. This committee included both British and Polish members, the majority of whom had direct links with education. One of the responsibilities of this Committee was to select Polish students to receive maintenance awards from the authorities. The principal objectives of the Committee were to ensure the provision of English language teaching for all Poles prepared to attend classes and, in the long term, to wind down the Polish educational institutions and encourage enrolment in British educational establishments. Between March 1947 and the end of September 1954 the committee incurred a total expenditure of £9,058,315 which had been used for the purposes of educating Poles in Britain.⁹⁹ The period of operation of the Committee for the Education of Poles in Great Britain ended on 30 September 1954. After this time responsibility was transferred to the Ministry of Education, which immediately established an Advisory Committee, including amongst its members nearly all those who had served on the Committee for the Education of Poles in Great Britain, to advise on Polish educational matters in Britain. The educational establishments which

had been under the control of the Committee were transferred to local education authority control, with Government reimbursement of any necessary expenditure. This was to continue until the schools became unnecessary.

In addition to maintaining strong ties to the Roman Catholic Church, the Poles further kept alive their historical and cultural heritage by establishing the General Sikorski Historical Institute and the Polish Library in London. The Polish Library itself stocked books of interest to Poles in Britain, whether in the Polish or English language. Initially it was maintained with the help of an annual grant of £11,000 from the Department of Education and Science. Between 1954 and the end of March 1967 Government funding to Polish cultural centres in the United Kingdom amounted to £200,000.¹⁰⁰

However, a decision to withdraw this funding was reached by the British Government in 1966, a time when maintaining the cultural identities of exiled minority groups in Britain seems to have lost importance in parliamentary circles. This decision was not made without much opposition. Many Conservative members of the House of Lords raised objections, as did a number of academics. Of particular concern was the possibility of

the Library having to close down and its books being dispersed throughout the country, with the threat of reduced access to both students and Polish readers to the collection. It was generally felt to be desirable to keep the collection together. A typical description of the Government decision to withdraw funding given by its opponents was that of C. Lewy of Trinity College Cambridge who described it as "a most unenlightened and deplorable action".¹⁰¹ There were many calls for the decision to be reversed. The Polish community deplored the possibility that the library should be lost, since it was an intellectual centre for Polish emigres throughout the world.

Birmingham University offered to house the research collection of the Polish Library but this was rejected by the Polish Library which preferred to maintain the entire library under its own control. The community felt the library to be its own property as many of the books had been donated by Polish exiles. The unity of the collection was maintained however under the arrangements by which the Library was handed over to the Polish Social and Cultural Association on 1 August 1967. The University of London School of Slavonic and East European Studies agreed to make an annual grant to the Association towards the salaries of the library staff in return for a representative on the governing body of the library.¹⁰²

In 1969 the Polish Cultural Fund applied for Government aid in purchasing a property for a cultural centre but its appeal was turned down by the Government.

The public libraries throughout Britain also stocked a small selection of books in Polish, and in building up this collection they were aided in their choices by the Committee for the Education of Poles in Great Britain and the Polish Library.

The effect of British attitudes towards the Soviet Union on relationships with the Polish exile community

Even during the Second World War attitudes towards Poles were not always favourable. After the Soviet Union entered the war on the side of the Allies against Nazi Germany, the Soviets' irreconcilable differences with the Poles meant that some, although not all, sections of the British public cooled in their attitudes towards the Poles. Certain sections of the press were particularly guilty of this; it was evident in the Communist newspaper the Daily Worker, and also in the newspapers under the control of the pro-Soviet Max Beaverbrook. Clashes between the Polish Government-in-Exile and the Soviet Union over post-war frontiers and also on responsibility for the Katyn massacre initially worked against the Poles in the eyes of a British public which saw the Soviets as

allies in the struggle against Nazism. Such antipathy towards the Poles was directed most frequently at the exiled government. Holders of such views often remained sympathetic to the suffering of the ordinary Polish people and continued to recognize the bravery of the Polish armed forces.

These difficulties did not remain indefinitely as when news of the persecution and terror in Poland during the Stalinist era reached Britain understanding and sympathy was seen to return in most sections of the public and the press. Nevertheless, some hostility towards the Poles did remain amongst Russophiles in Britain. In the House of Commons on 4 February 1946 Leslie Solley, a Labour MP, claimed "that the British public is disturbed" by anti-Soviet intrigues and propaganda engaged in by General Anders and officers of the Polish Second Corps, and he demanded to know what action was going to be taken to put an end to it.¹⁰³ The only reply he received was that the situation was receiving active consideration. Other organizations went further and vociferously objected to the resettlement in Britain of Poles who refused repatriation. One such example of this was the West Ham Trades Council which forwarded to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs a resolution passed by its members in protest of the Polish resettlement. A Gallup opinion poll taken in June 1946 showed that 56 per cent of the

British public disapproved of the decision of the British Government to allow Poles to resettle in Britain, 30 per cent approved, whilst 14 per cent did not express an opinion.¹⁰⁴

Non-repatriable Poles

The boundaries of Poland and the degree of Polish independence were significant issues which had emerged in post-war discussions between the victorious Allied powers. In addition, there was also the sensitive matter of the possible future resettlement of non-repatriable Poles. Of particular concern to this thesis were the attitudes towards their resettlement in Britain.

There were divisions on what policy should be adopted by the British Government towards any non-repatriables at the end of the Second World War. One particularly vociferous proponent of the acceptance of a fair proportion of Poles for settlement in Britain was the member for the English Universities, Miss Eleanor Rathbone. Despite calls for a pledge to accept a limited number of refugees in Britain after the war, no such pledge was forthcoming from the British Government for a number of years. Indeed, even in 1946, when the forcible repatriation of Poles had been rejected, the Government would not commit itself to accepting unlimited numbers of

Poles, stating that some might be forced to settle elsewhere.

However, calls for the right of Poles to residency in Britain were strengthened when it became clear that the post-war Polish frontiers would not be the same as those of 1939 and that many Poles would find their homes had been placed under the jurisdiction of the Soviet Union. Although many members of Parliament agreed that Soviet claims to Polish territory should be complied with, it was still strongly felt that Britain had moral obligations to the Poles which needed to be maintained. After the adoption of the Curzon line had been agreed upon by the three powers at the Yalta conference Churchill indicated that government policy towards the long-term acceptance of refugees was changing, telling Parliament that, for those Poles who were unhappy about returning home, Britain

"must be regarded as their final security.
If everything else fails, here are open
the portals of the British Empire."¹⁰⁵

The official line taken by the British Government towards the Poles remained that stated by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Ernest Bevin, on 20 August 1945, that Poles were urged

"to go back to their country and assume their responsibilities in building the new Poland. They will render a far greater service there than they can do from outside."¹⁰⁶

After the Yalta conference it was made clear by the British Government that no Poles would be repatriated against their will but that hopefully the conditions would be created within Poland which would encourage as many of them as possible to return. These conditions did not occur and in fact as time passed conditions made repatriation even less of an attractive option for many Poles. For example, many Polish units which had served under Western command were dubbed as 'fascists' by the Polish Provisional Government, which made members of these units even more fearful of persecution upon return to Poland.

The threat of Soviet dominance over the future Poland initiated the reluctance by some Poles towards their eventual repatriation, some for ideological reasons others because they also had a realistic fear for their lives if they returned. This was particularly true of the Polish Second Corps who had experienced deportation to the Soviet Union in the first two years of the Second World War, and also of the professional officer class of the old Polish army who feared punishment as

reactionaries. The attitudes of the officers in turn affected the attitudes of the rank and file towards repatriation. Although many Poles hoped one day to return to Poland they refused to do so whilst the country was under Soviet domination, particularly as the guarantees of safety given by the Polish Government were unconvincing. In such circumstances they decided in the meantime to remain in Britain.

There were a number of allegations made in the Press and elsewhere against the Polish officers and Government-in-exile putting pressure on the Polish forces to refuse repatriation. Indeed after the initial return of some Poles immediately after the war there was very little further repatriation.

By January 1946 only 17.2 per cent of the Polish army under Western military command had opted for repatriation, and of those Poles who had served in the British Royal Air Force a paltry 0.5 per cent chose to return to Poland.¹⁰⁷ Transportation difficulties meant that many Poles had to wait for long periods of time to be repatriated and this gave many of them an opportunity to delay their decision or to change their decision to be repatriated.

On 20 March 1946 all members of the Polish Armed Forces received a document, in Polish, outlining the conditions which would apply to them should they return to Poland. The document was issued by the Polish Provisional Government as a result of consultations between it and the British Government. The statement made by the Polish Provisional Government as contained in the document informed the Poles that no punitive measures or reprisals would be carried out against them unless they had served in the German Army, committed acts of High Treason or been guilty of common crimes. Those members who chose to be demobilized in Poland would be entitled to all pensions and benefits accorded to all other Polish soldiers. Polish citizens who had lived east of the Curzon line in 1939 and whose place of birth would now be located in the Soviet Union were guaranteed Polish citizenship.

The statement of the Polish Provisional Government was accompanied by a letter from Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Ernest Bevin, which outlined British policy, stating that the conditions set out by the Polish Provisional Government were considered to be satisfactory and that the Poles should now decide whether they wished to be repatriated or resettled. Bevin informed the Poles that in the view of the British Government it was in the best interests of Poland for them to return and "make

their contribution to the restoration of the prosperity of liberated Poland". No promise was made that any resettlement would necessarily take place in Britain. The Poles were also informed that their military units would be disbanded as soon as possible.¹⁰⁸ During his statement in the House of Commons regarding this document Bevin told the House that he did not want to dwell too much on what Britain would do for those choosing resettlement as he did not in any way want to discourage repatriation. The British Government continually reasserted that Poles should, when they felt it possible to do so, return to Poland and help in the reconstruction of that country.

Despite continued efforts by the Polish Government to persuade the exiles to return, there were few repatriations after the initial returnees. The Polish Government was particularly keen to persuade leaders of the Polish community in Britain to return as such repatriations provided propaganda opportunities. During the mid-1950s there was an attempt by the Polish authorities to persuade exiles to return but this was generally unsuccessful. In September 1955, however, they were successful in securing the return of Hugon Hanke, a Minister of the Polish Government-in-exile, who had become disillusioned with emigre politics. Hanke urged other Polish exiles to follow his example. However,

although the return of Hanke shocked and dismayed other Polish emigre leaders he was relatively unknown amongst the wider Polish community in Britain. Hanke was one of very few successes in a campaign by the Polish Government at that time attempting to persuade notable Polish emigres to return by promising they would not be punished and would get jobs corresponding to the previous position held by them in Polish society. These attempts to persuade Poles to return resulted in September 1955 in the deportation from Britain of Josef Malicki, secretary-general of the Polish Social and Cultural Association, a body sponsored by the Polish Government, for his involvement in the campaign.

The Poles as former allies

After the end of the Second World War most people in Britain were sympathetic to the Poles who were seen as an unjustly abandoned ally. There were numerous expressions of outrage, including those by several Members of Parliament, when it was announced that no Poles would be present at the Allied Victory Parade in London on 8 June 1945. However, the Poles' absence was more a result of political considerations than a failure to recognize the bravery and effort of the Polish forces. The British Government had invited the newly recognized Polish Government in Warsaw to send representatives from the

Polish forces to attend as the official representatives of the Polish forces and, after initially agreeing to attend, the Polish authorities in Warsaw decided not to send a military contingent. Twenty-five of the Poles who had flown with the British forces were also invited to attend as part of the Royal Air Force contingent but refused to do so in protest at the lack of recognition given to Polish ex-servicemen who had served under Western command and refused repatriation to Poland under the Communist regime.

Even this sympathy for former allies had a limit though. On 29 August 1949 the Committee for the Commemoration of the Invasion of Poland 1939, chaired by General Anders, held a press conference at which it was revealed that the London Transport Executive had refused to display a poster prepared by the Committee on the grounds that it was too controversial. The poster read :

"September, 1939. - Poland risked all for liberty - yours as well as hers.
September, 1949. - You have your liberty, but don't forget Poland's."¹⁰⁹

There was also an article entitled 'How to treat our Poles' published in the Daily Mirror in August 1946 written by Leslie B. Thomas, who had come into contact

with the Polish forces in Italy and the Middle East during the Second World War. The article warned that the Poles of the Second Corps were not like those Poles who had already had contact with Britain and that they were "flannellers" who would use hardluck stories to their advantage. He also stressed their lack of English, illiteracy and acceptance of whatever was told to them by their Polish officers. The picture painted by Thomas of the character of this body of men was far from flattering.¹¹⁰

Accusations of fascist sympathies

Throughout Britain there were allegations that some of the Poles had been fascists. This arose from confusion concerning those Poles who, having found themselves in territory under German control, had been forced to either work or fight for the Germans. A number of the Poles who had been in the forces under British command had been enrolled after their capture as members of the Wehrmacht, and it was also known that amongst the Polish displaced persons entering Britain as EVWs a large proportion had been used as forced labour within the Reich. An estimated 39,000 of the Polish forces in Britain had in some way served the Germans during the Second World War, 18,000 of these then went on to fight for the Allies, the remainder not having had the opportunity to fight due to

the end of the war.¹¹¹ Allegations were made by anti-Polish agitators in Britain that large numbers of these Poles had not been forced into co-operation with the Germans but had done so willingly. However, on behalf of the Government, Frederick Bellenger, Secretary of State for War, attempted to reassure Parliament that this was not the case, that they had been conscripted compulsorily and had taken the first opportunity to desert to the Allies "often at considerable risk to themselves".¹¹² Reassurance was also given that those who had served the Germans during the war underwent careful security screening.¹¹³ This did not put an end to all the accusations of fascists and war criminals having arrived in Britain along with the Poles in the aftermath of the Second World War. For example, there was the case of Wladyslaw Dering who had arrived in Britain with the Polish army in 1946 and was wanted by the Polish Government for aiding biological experiments on Jews 1941-1944. After considering the evidence presented to them the British Government, after initially intending to comply with the extradition request, decided against deporting him.¹¹⁴

The Communist Party of Great Britain capitalized on suspicions that there were fascists amongst the Poles in Britain by seeking publicity for such allegations. In 1946 it published a leaflet entitled No British Jobs for

Fascist Poles in which it claimed that at least one-third of the Poles in Britain had fought for the Germans, whilst the remainder were all fascists reluctant to return to Poland now that it had a 'democratic' government. It also described the Polish Government-in-exile in London as "opposed to the democratic reform of Poland". The leaflet then went on to cite opposition to Poles which had been expressed during the TUC meeting at which the use of Polish labour in Britain had been discussed. Following on from the accusations levelled at the Poles the leaflet then quoted Hansard in which it was estimated that the Poles in Britain would cost the British taxpayers £33,000,000 during 1946. It ended with the demand for the Poles to be returned to Poland, claiming that there was no reason for them to take British jobs when the "democratically elected Polish Government has repeatedly offered to take these men back and to provide them with work".

In 1950 the Immigration Service was ordered to undertake security screening of former members of the Polish Second Corps and their dependants who had not previously been screened at the port of their arrival in Britain. The screening process was then extended to other nationalities who had arrived as a result of the Second World War. The screening undertaken of these groups in 1950 took two years to complete. Questions relating to

the effectiveness and thoroughness of such post-war screening processes have been brought into prominence recently in the debate surrounding war criminals.

Images of Polish criminality

As the Second World War ended there was a growing image in Britain, particularly in the press, of criminality rampaging through the exiled Polish community.

One incident which caught the imagination of all sections of the Press and the general public was the escape from prison in Norwich of Stanislaw Zborowski, an armed Polish ex-soldier. Zborowski had escaped on 30 May 1946 with two other Polish soldiers who were quickly recaptured. However, the hunt for Zborowski took much longer and he was not recaptured until 22 June 1947. Zborowski also staged a second escape in April 1948 but it took only four days to capture him on this occasion. The chase for this Polish prisoner, who had been sentenced for 9 months imprisonment after being found guilty of a £364 robbery which involved the theft of 44,000 cigarettes from a NAAFI canteen, gained a great deal of publicity but was not reported in such a manner which could be seen as hostile to the Polish community in general. However, this cannot be said of the reporting of all criminal cases which involved Poles. For example, on 5 April 1948

an article was carried in the Bradford Telegraph and Argus with the title 'POLE AS PASSPORT "PIMPERNEL"', which related the tale of five men who had been charged with providing residents of a displaced persons camp in Germany with false passports enabling them to travel freely throughout Europe. However, despite the headline, only one of the men was Polish, the others were British. During April and May 1948 there were a number of criminal cases reported involving Poles which could only have served to fuel those already hostile to their resettlement in Britain. In one instance a case was reported in which a Pole who admitted to a £2,500 robbery but also tried to get his girlfriend imprisoned so that she would not be able to see other men while he was in jail.

The image of Poles as black marketeers also gained popular credence after the Second World War. For example, there was the story of one Pole who left his camp with nothing and within three months had a bank balance of £10,000 from the profits made from the black market.¹¹⁵ As with the British population, members of the Polish community did become involved in black market activities but the numbers involved tended to be exaggerated by both the press and the gossips.

To some extent the incidence of criminality amongst the Poles can be attributed to the idleness of camp life. It also has to be accepted that amongst any large group of people there are likely to be a small minority who will engage in criminal activity. Many of the criminal cases involving the Poles were related to disorder. There were also several cases of unauthorized possession of firearms, an offence also common amongst the indigenous population at this time, which can be related to the easy availability of firearms following a period spent in the armed forces.

Problems created by the uneven gender distribution of the Poles in Britain

Longer-lasting hostility towards the Poles was caused by the uneven gender distribution of the refugees, with men far outnumbering women. The Poles arriving in Britain during 1941-45 were predominantly men who were members of the Polish armed forces. More women and children arrived in the years immediately after the Second World War both as dependants and, in the case of women, as EVWs. On 1 December 1951 there were 101,284 men and 34,486 women registered as Polish nationals in Great Britain. The actual gender distribution of Poles in any given locality tended to differ according to the type of accommodation and employment available. As stated in the 1971 Census

of the Poles resident in the United Kingdom 73,500 were male and 35,300 female.¹¹⁶

This did create some hostility towards the Poles by some local men who saw them as competition for British women. There were a number of marriages between Polish men and British women during the war, including a few thousand Scottish-Polish marriages. By the end of the Second World War there had been approximately 4,000 Polish-British marriages, with a similar number of children resulting from these marriages.¹¹⁷ After the war the number of these marriages would have significantly increased due to the lack of available Polish women for the Polish men in Britain.

Inter-marriage worked both for and against the acceptance of Poles into the local community. Although it created hostility in some sections of the community, it also increased their apparent assimilation by many members of the local community via family links and increased acquisition of English language.

A further factor in creating hostility towards the Poles was when some Polish men became involved with British women despite having wives back in Poland. Koczy in his review of the Scottish-Polish Society talks of

illegitimate children resulting from these relationships souring Scottish-Polish relations.¹¹⁸

Conclusion

As time progressed, the Poles were regarded as less of a threat, hostility towards them dwindled and there was a return to the image of the Poles in Britain in terms of their contribution to the Allied war effort. In January 1968 Portsmouth park committee approved plans for a £3,000 memorial to the Polish community in Britain. A Polish exile community had existed in Portsmouth since 1834 when more than 200 Polish soldiers had arrived in flight from the failed uprising of 1831. Of a more controversial nature was the memorial to the victims of the Katyn massacre in London. The Soviet Embassy objected to this when it was proposed to erect it in 1976, six years after the fund had been started to pay for it. The Embassy lodged its protest with Kensington and Chelsea Council which had approved the memorial bearing the inscription "Katyn 1940" to be erected in Gunnersbury cemetery. The Soviets objected on the grounds that the date of 1940 implied that they were responsible for the massacre rather than the Germans who the Soviets claimed had been the perpetrators in 1941. These actions by the Soviet Embassy resulted in Sir Frederick Bennett, the Conservative MP for Torbay and

chairman of the Katyn Memorial Fund, to table a motion in the House of Commons to discuss the "improper conduct" of the Soviet Embassy over the issue. However, the official Government response was one of appeasement towards all parties; whilst it put forward no objections to the memorial it also refused an invitation to the unveiling ceremony to avoid offending the Soviets.

Although a generalization, perhaps the best summary of British attitudes towards the Poles is that given by Patterson :

"By 1960 the Poles were no longer conceived of as potential scabs, fascists or Casanovas. Instead they were seen as good workers, ratepayers, solid citizens and family men."¹¹⁹

As time passed and feelings of competition towards the Poles lessened, the pervading attitude towards the Poles was one of respect for their contribution to the Allied cause during the Second World War and subsequent to this, a respect for an integrated, although not assimilated, Polish exile community in Britain. There also continued to be some feeling of responsibility for the fate of Poland as part of the post-Second World War settlement. This is reflected in a description of the Poles in Britain by The Times in 1985 :

"The majority of Poles living in Britain are still, in the true sense of the word, exiles. Whether they found themselves here as Stalin imposed Soviet domination on Poland in 1944/5, or as General Jaruzelski reimposed it by proxy in 1982, they are unnaturally banished from their native land by the political circumstances which we call, in shorthand, "Yalta"."¹²⁰

8. THE RESPONSES TO UKRAINIANS IN BRITAIN

The Ukrainians who came to Britain at the end of the Second World War could be divided into two groups; those who came here voluntarily under the European Volunteer Workers' schemes and those who were brought here involuntarily by the British Government as prisoners of war. However, both groups were settlers here, the prisoners having little desire to return to the Soviet Union where they feared persecution for their nationalist beliefs and for having fought against the Soviet Union or performed forced labour under German command.

British perceptions of the 'Ukrainian problem'

For most of the Second World War the situation in Ukraine had not figured highly in the thoughts of Britain's politicians, the 'Ukrainian problem' not really becoming an issue until 1945. In January of that year Rhys Davies, a Labour Member of Parliament, spoke out on the subject in favour of Ukrainians being allowed to have some input into the discussions on the control of their territories once peace had been established. He argued that 48,000,000 people lived in Ukraine, more than the population of Great Britain, and it was wrong for such decisions to be made for them.¹ Professor Savory, Member for Queen's University, Belfast, put forward a similar

argument in February when speaking of the Ukrainian lands previously under Polish control, and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Anthony Eden, when asked what information he had on the views of Polish Ukrainians on their becoming part of the Soviet Union, replied that he was aware of the Ukrainian nationalist movement but admitted that he had no information as to what their actual views on the situation were although he did make reference to the inter-war clashes between Poles and Ukrainians.²

It was only the turn in foreign policy after the end of the Second World War which changed the attitude of the British Government towards the Ukrainians. Whilst the Soviet Union had remained an ally of Britain the British Government were unwilling to offend the Soviets. Further to this, it was not prudent to offend the Soviets immediately after the cessation of hostilities because not only were Soviet citizens facing liberation by the British forces but nearly 4,000 British prisoners of war were liberated by the Soviets.³ Whilst the Soviets had British citizens under their care the British authorities were limited in their actions until their safe repatriation had been secured. However, once these British men had been returned and the Cold War had begun to set in, it became convenient to regard the Ukrainians

and Balts who had so far escaped repatriation as oppressed peoples under Russian Communist domination.

Politicians and the public became concerned about the number of Soviet citizens who had been forcibly repatriated and thus were now perceived to have been political refugees who had been denied asylum in Britain. There were questions raised in the House of Commons on 21 May 1947 regarding the forcible repatriation to the Soviet Union of 185 men from the prisoner of war camp at Rimini, actions which, according to Labour Member of Parliament, Richard Stokes, had resulted in a number of attempted suicides. Replying on behalf of the Government, Christopher Mayhew, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, stated that there had been no attempted suicides and, although three men did escape, there were no other incidents. The men who had been repatriated were said to have been either Soviet citizens serving in the Soviet armed forces or had given active assistance to the enemy, categories of men it had been agreed to return to the Soviet Union under the terms of the Yalta Agreement on Repatriation and that "no undertaking has been given which would preclude the repatriation of men in these categories". Stokes then contended that it was

"outrageous to expect to continue to carry out a policy laid down at Yalta, which clearly adumbrated that there should be a fair trial and return of these people, when there is now no fair trial".

He also claimed that these men were persuaded to enter the train transporting them to the Soviet Union by being told that they were being taken to Scotland to help the miners there. Mayhew said that he would be willing to examine any evidence Stokes had to support his claims, but that he thought the version of events he himself had given was nearer to the truth.⁴ Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, agreed that the idea of forced repatriations to any country was "abhorrent" to Britain but that any exploitation of Britain by asylum seekers could not be tolerated. When asked by Godfrey Nicholson that at the very least those who faced certain death after repatriation should not be returned, Bevin replied that although there had been some suicides by people who could not face repatriation he did not think that Britain were actually sending anyone to face certain death and that Britain's duty to return these people was clearly defined in the terms of the Yalta Agreement.⁵ This statement was made on 11 June 1947, only seven days before questions were raised in the Commons regarding the transportation to Britain of more than 8,000 Ukrainian

prisoners of war from Rimini. Hector McNeil, Minister of State, replying on behalf of the Government, stated that there had been demands by the Soviet authorities for the return of these men but that the majority of them had originated from territories which had been incorporated into the Soviet Union after 1 September 1939 so the British Government had not felt bound to comply with this request.⁶

The transfer to Britain of Ukrainian prisoners of war

When considering the war records of some of the Ukrainians who fought on the side of the Axis powers it may at first seem surprising that these men were not returned to the Soviet Union but if one looks at political developments after the Second World War, when the Cold War was already beginning to take shape, the motives of the British Government become clearer. It may have been the original intention of the British Government to return to the Soviet Union the Ukrainian prisoners of war held under British guard in the Italian town of Rimini but, when the time came for this to be done, the Cold War atmosphere meant the West was reluctant to repatriate to the Soviet Union anyone unwilling to go. At the Potsdam Conference in July 1945 Stalin demanded the return of all prisoners of war of Soviet nationality held in Italy and placed increasing

pressure on the Italian Government for the return of these men. Subsequent to this, the British Government decided to transfer 8,397 Ukrainian prisoners of war from Rimini in Italy⁷ to England in May 1947. At the time the British Government justified its actions by stating that preliminary screening had shown the majority of these men were from the Polish Ukraine, were not Soviet citizens on 1 September 1939, and therefore the Allies were not required to engage in their forcible repatriation to the Soviet Union . Further attempts to determine the men's nationality were to be made after arrival in Britain. It was also claimed that leaving prisoners of war in Italy after the ratification of the Italian peace treaty would represent a burden on the Italian Government after the withdrawal of the Allied troops and that this was the primary reason for the removal of the Ukrainians to Britain.

The labour shortage

(a) The use of prisoners of war

During the Second World War and its aftermath there was a shortage of available labour in Britain, a factor which worked in favour of the refugee groups. If it was not for this fact there would have been no European Volunteer Worker schemes, the numbers of refugees allowed into

Britain would therefore have been on a much smaller scale.

During the course of the war there had been some concern about the employment in key industries, for example coalmining, of enemy prisoners of war held in Britain, but wartime concerns did not greatly affect the majority of Ukrainians who arrived as prisoners of war since the bulk of these men were not transported to Britain until after the cessation of hostilities. Indeed the Ukrainians who were transported to Britain from Rimini benefited from a marked turn around in policy towards them as prisoners of war. When questioned in February 1946 about the possibility of allowing Italian prisoners of war to remain in Britain if they so wished the Home Secretary, Chuter Ede, stated that "the general principle is that prisoners of war who are brought here temporarily for custody should ultimately return to their own countries".⁸ If this was still the case at the time of the transportation of Ukrainian prisoners to Britain in 1948, then it becomes clear that they were already being thought of more as displaced refugee volunteer workers than prisoners of war awaiting repatriation. This supposition is supported by the rapidity with which the Ukrainian prisoners of war were reclassified as European Volunteer Workers; indeed Daniel Lipson, an independent

Member of Parliament, asked if these Ukrainians would be employed in Britain.⁹

That they should be used in industry or agriculture was an obvious step as there was already concern that holding these men as prisoners of war represented a financial burden on the British authorities. In July 1948 it was stated that 8,397 Ukrainian prisoners of war remained in Britain and that they were mainly being employed in agriculture.¹⁰

However, some doubts were expressed at the time about the legitimacy of the reclassification of prisoners of war as displaced persons or European Volunteer Workers. It had been agreed in the IRO constitution, as approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1946, that prisoners of war could not be reclassified as displaced persons. However, none of the Ukrainian prisoners of war had been granted European Volunteer Worker status at that time although it was stated in Parliament on 15 July 1948 that it was hoped that selection teams would soon be visiting the camps to facilitate the granting of civilian status.¹¹ This had to be achieved in a very short space of time as Britain had committed itself to ending the presence of all prisoners of war in the country by 31 December 1948, the Germans and Italians having all been repatriated or

allowed to work in Britain under civilian status and the Prisoner of War department of the War Office closed down in July 1948.

By 7 December 1948 there were said to be just 566 Ukrainian prisoners of war being held in Britain, a large number of whom were sick and therefore unavailable for work other than the administrative work necessary to the maintenance of the camp where they were being held. As prisoners of war were no longer to be held in Britain after 1948 those classed as unfit for work were placed under the care of the National Assistance Board on 1 January 1949. The Secretary of State for War, Emmanuel Shinwell, told Parliament in December 1948 that although he would like to make a final statement on the future of these men he was unfortunately unable to do so as there were "difficulties".¹²

(b) The use of European Volunteer Workers

However, the majority of Ukrainians entering Britain after the war came over initially not as prisoners of war but as European Volunteer Workers (EVWs) recruited from the displaced persons' camps on mainland Europe. Early recruitment was restricted to women but this was then extended to male recruits after it became apparent that female labour would not be sufficient to fulfil Britain's

manpower requirements. When the first batch of 63 male EVWs arrived in Britain on 21 April 1947 approximately half of them were Ukrainian. These were followed by much larger numbers; 1,440 homeless Ukrainians arrived in Britain on 27 May 1947. By 3 June 1947, Ness Edwards, a member of the Labour Government, reported to the House of Commons that approximately 10,000 EVWs had arrived in Britain, consisting "almost entirely of Balts and Ukrainians". The placing of the EVWs in employment after arrival was reported to be "proceeding satisfactorily", with the comment "Indeed we are afraid that it may prejudice some of the other foreign workers who are already here." Public statements of satisfaction were not always mirrored by private statements, however, and in private discussions in the Ministry of Labour the Ukrainians were initially perceived as "essentially peasant" and therefore less suited to settling in Britain than the preferred Balts.¹³

As outlined above, the bulk of the Ukrainians who settled in post-war Britain arrived as European Volunteer Workers and as such they were directed into the undermanned industries by the Ministry of Labour. Consequently, most Ukrainians' first experience of employment in Britain was in the textile industries and agriculture. Ukrainian prisoners of war were often used as agricultural gang labour until their reclassification as EVWs, although

even then many continued to work in agricultural employment until more attractive employment became available. Amongst EVWs of all nationalities there was a tendency to leave agricultural employment as quickly as possible to find work which offered higher wages and better conditions, and often there was a move to urban centres in which a Ukrainian community was already establishing itself. The National Coal Board was also keen to employ large numbers of EVWs but there were difficulties with numerous local branches of the National Union of Mineworkers. The hostile attitudes of certain trades unions were matched by a reluctance amongst the Ukrainians and other East European refugees to become involved in the unions which they believed to have sympathies with the Soviet Union. For example, in 1958 there was the case of a Ukrainian truck driver for the Pressed Steel Company in Swindon who refused to join the Amalgamated Engineering Union, which was known to have strong Communist links. The Ukrainian had worked for the company for two years. The trouble over union membership arose when there were complaints from other workers that he and another man of British nationality who had also refused to join the union were working too much overtime. The Ukrainian had said that he would rather hand in his notice than join the union although the British man capitulated and joined in order that the dispute could be settled.

The Ukrainians in Britain - numbers involved

Official figures on the number of Ukrainians in Britain are difficult to find because at the time of their arrival Ukraine was not recognized as a separate nation and its former inhabitants were therefore listed under figures for the other nationalities which had been in control of Ukraine in 1939. In 1980 Kenneth Weetch asked the Government if in the following year's Census it would be possible for Ukrainians to be classified as 'Ukrainians' rather than under the heading 'Russian' as had been the case with the previous Censuses. The reply from Sir George Younger was that all those born outside the United Kingdom and Irish Republic would be asked to give the current name of the country in which they were born, and as such, Ukrainians would be listed not as Russians or Ukrainians but as having been born in what was in 1980 termed the USSR.¹⁴ There was also the additional problem of Ukrainians who had given false nationalities in order to escape deportation. However estimates were made and, in 1951, it was stated in Parliament that approximately 23,000 Ukrainians came to Britain as European Volunteer Workers, 8,000 as prisoners of war and 5,000 as members of the Polish forces.¹⁵ Other figures had estimated that, excluding ex-prisoners of war, 20,930 Ukrainians arrived in Britain as part of the EVW scheme, 16,210 of whom were men, 4,720 women.¹⁶

There were also 411 adults, 375 of whom were women, and 451 children who arrived in Britain as dependants of Ukrainian EVWs. No dependants of the ex-prisoners of war came to Britain.¹⁷

Later arrivals

Very few Ukrainians arrived in Britain after the cessation of the foreign labour schemes in the early 1950s. This was mainly due to lack of opportunity for Ukrainians wanting to escape to the West but it is unclear exactly how many more Ukrainians the British authorities would have been prepared to allow into the country if there had been many waiting for permission to enter. For example, in December 1958 the Government said that it was prepared to grant visas to the fiancées of two Ukrainians resident in Slough in order that they could marry, providing that the applicants could produce to the visa officer in Belgrade travel documents bearing adequate return facilities to Yugoslavia. The Home Office claimed that it was "always ready to further the course of true love", but not, it seems, if it meant allowing permanent settlement in Britain by the two fiancées.¹⁸

Also in 1958 the British Government offered to admit into Britain fifty refugees who had suffered from

tuberculosis. However, in June 1959 there were complaints from the Worthing Refugee Relief Committee that only two individuals had been admitted to Britain under these conditions and that they had been waiting for seven months for a family of Ukrainians, sponsored by them, the father of whom had suffered from tuberculosis, to be allowed into the country. The Committee had a flat waiting to house the family which had been furnished by donations from the public. The father of the family had been pronounced free of tuberculosis in 1954 and subsequently declared fit for light work. The family had been living in refugee camps for fourteen years and the Committee asked that the Prime Minister, who had launched World Refugee Year on 1 June, should sympathetically reconsider their application for admission to Britain.¹⁹

In 1963 a small number of Soviet citizens were given permission by the Soviet authorities to join their relatives in Britain. However, the numbers concerned were very small; fewer than twenty people were allowed to leave the Soviet Union for Britain.

Theoretically there was a further opportunity for Ukrainians in the Soviet Union to join their relatives in Britain and the rest of the world after the signing of the Helsinki Agreement in 1975 in which such emigration from the Soviet Union was provided for. However, the

Soviet Union remained reluctant for families to be reunited and Britain was obliged to raise the matter repeatedly with the Soviet authorities in cases relevant to the agreements made at Helsinki.

Concern over the forcible repatriations

Initially a number of forcible repatriations of Soviet citizens had been undertaken, but as anti-Soviet feeling grew these ceased to happen. In later years the British Government remained secretive about its role in these early forcible repatriations of Soviet citizens, retaining a number of documents relating to Operation Keelhaul rather than releasing them into the Public Record Office when their original time limit had expired. When questioned in Parliament in 1978 as to the contents of the documents which had been retained Dr David Owen replied that one of the reports named persons who might still be alive in the Soviet Union, whilst the other three dealt with "matters of security which it is not our practice to reveal".²⁰ Other documents were said to have been destroyed in 1968 or 1969. However, one such document did become available when the copy held by the United States was released into the public domain. The release of these documents encouraged renewed interest in the repatriations and the Liberal politician Jo Grimond, former Director of Personnel of the European Division of

the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration 1945-47, asked the Government in March 1978 whether arrangements would be made to pay compensation to the survivors of the people handed over to the Soviet authorities at the end of the war. The answer to this was an emphatic 'no'.²¹ The release of the documents also stimulated media interest; for example in February 1978 there was a series of articles in The Times regarding the contents of the file made available by the United States.²² In particular, the role of Major Denis Hills in shielding a number of Soviet citizens, including the Ukrainian Division, from repatriation to the Soviet Union received considerable publicity. The release of the documents and the subsequent publicity sparked off much debate concerning the moral position of the repatriations.

Deportations from Britain

However, not all the Ukrainian prisoners of war brought to Britain were allowed to remain in the country. Questions were first raised in the House of Commons on 13 May 1948 regarding the impending deportation to Germany of approximately 500 Ukrainians. Richard Stokes, who raised the question, described these Ukrainians as "unfit for work" and asked for the decision to undertake the deportations to be reconsidered as they were not German

and had nowhere to go in that country. He asked that they be reclassified as political refugees. The Home Secretary, James Chuter Ede, denied that any such decision to deport any Ukrainians had been taken.²³ Questions about deportations persisted, and on 10 June Stanley Prescott raised the issue of the impending deportation to Germany of sixty Ukrainians who had fallen ill whilst in Britain and he requested for such proposals to be dropped. In reply Ede referred him to the answer of 13 May.²⁴ The argument continued to rage throughout June with the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Chuter Ede, forced to deny continually that a decision to deport any of the Ukrainians had been taken. Frank Beswick asked Ede at what date responsibility for the Ukrainians had been transferred to him, but Ede required notice of the question before he felt that he could reply.²⁵ Some confusion as to who bore the responsibility for these men continued amongst members for a month until the situation was finally clarified by Ede with the statement that whilst they remained prisoners of war the War Office was responsible for them but any discussion of their being allowed to settle as civilians in Britain also concerned the Home Secretary.²⁶

The matter of deportations was raised again in January 1949 following the deportations to Germany of a number of Ukrainians during the previous month. In December 1948

it had been stated that there were difficulties with some of the 566 Ukrainian prisoners of war who remained in Britain although it was not stated at the time that deportations were imminent.²⁷ Ede made a statement regarding the deportations in Parliament on 19 January 1949. In it he reported that by the end of 1948 there were 530 Ukrainians remaining in Britain who were still officially prisoners of war, of these 300 had been found either unsuitable or unwilling to assume European Volunteer Worker status, the rest being either ill or engaged in hospital duties. International obligations meant that it was necessary to release all prisoners of war from military custody on 31 December 1948 so it had been decided to send the 300 men unacceptable for civilian work in Britain to Germany for discharge. However, in the event only 80 men were deported, 46 of whom wished to return; 33 who, because of the records as prisoners of war, could not be accepted as EVWs, and one man who had refused all offers of employment. A final decision about the remainder was deferred to see if it would be possible to place them in employment in Britain "without detriment to the interests of British subjects".²⁸ Quintin Hogg wanted to know why it was felt necessary to parade 32 of the men with their hands handcuffed behind their backs whilst en route to Germany. Michael Stewart gave the reply that a number of them had threatened violence to either themselves or their guards

and that they would forcibly resist their removal. In order to prevent this it was felt necessary to handcuff them.²⁹ Presumably these men were among the 34 mentioned above who had not chosen to return but were found unsuitable to remain in Britain.

Reports of the deportations appeared in many of the national newspapers. An editorial in the New Statesman and Nation used the deportations as an excuse to make demands to "clear out the rubbish amongst those who have already come" as part of volunteer worker and resettlement schemes. The Ukrainians themselves created attention for the deportations by writing to national newspapers appealing for clemency towards their countrymen facing a return to the Continent. Hunger strikes were also threatened by the Ukrainians. The Archbishop of Canterbury involved himself in the protest by writing to the Home Secretary expressing his opposition to the proposed deportations. The public outcry which had followed the announcement of the proposed deportations of 300 Ukrainians and the bad publicity for the British Government which resulted was a determining factor in the actual number of deportations being reduced to just 80 men.

Re-emigration

Not all the Ukrainians who arrived in Britain in the years immediately after the end of the Second World War remained in Britain, many re-emigrated to Canada and the United States where large Ukrainian exile communities already existed. There was also a small incidence of re-emigration to other countries, for example Australia and New Zealand. An estimated 26 per cent of all Ukrainians, including 50 per cent of the women, emigrated. Only 17 per cent of the ex-prisoners of war left Britain to settle elsewhere.³⁰ Having been given the chance of civilian life in Britain the ex-prisoners of war were often the most eager to integrate themselves into the life of their new country.

Naturalization

The Ukrainians who did choose to settle permanently in Britain were allowed to seek naturalization after the statutory period of five years' residence. In the case of ex-prisoners of war, the period of residence was dated from the point at which civilian status was attained. Naturalization was particularly important for those Ukrainians who were considering going abroad for any length of time. This was particularly true for those who wished to visit Ukraine again, since unless they

officially obtained British nationality they remained Soviet citizens and travel to that country was therefore undertaken at their own risk.

The dangers of returning to the Soviet Union without the protection of British citizenship was illustrated by the case of Nickolai Shcharegin a Soviet citizen who had been resident in Britain for twenty years and was married to a United Kingdom citizen but travelled to the Soviet Union on business in October 1968 on a Home Office travel document which was clearly marked as invalid for the USSR. He was subsequently detained by the Soviet authorities after his arrival in that country. The British consul in Moscow immediately made inquiries on behalf of Shcharegin's wife but it was not until October 1969 that the consulate was informed that he was to be tried for an unnamed offence. Shcharegin received a ten year sentence for treason and was not released until September 1978. The Soviets claimed that Shcharegin was in fact an assumed name and that he was not in fact a Ukrainian deported to Germany during the Second World war but a defector from the Red Army in 1947, one year before his arrival in Britain. The managing director of the company for which Shcharegin worked told the press :

"It was idiotic that he went to a country he had defected from. I have no idea why

he did it. But we had no idea of his background at the time. If we had known I might not have employed him, and I certainly would not have considered sending him to Moscow. He did not have a British passport, but had travel documents issued by the British Government."³¹

During his imprisonment Shcharegin was visited by his wife three times until January 1971 after which her applications to see him were refused. She led a long campaign to free him before eventually seeking, and being granted, a divorce. Shcharegin initially refused offers of Soviet papers after his release, despite threats of rearrest, as he intended to apply for British citizenship and did not want to forfeit his claims. He arrived back in Britain eventually in November 1978, on a Soviet passport he had been forced to accept as the only way he could leave the Soviet Union.

However, British citizenship could only provide protection to a degree. In August 1977 the Soviet authorities arrested a British student, whose father was of Ukrainian origin, for distributing anti-Soviet propaganda whilst visiting relatives in Ukraine. Initially this was denied by the student and there was pressure for his release from the National Union of

Students, his Member of Parliament, the Foreign Office and the British Embassy in Moscow. However, he was not released until January 1978, after having publicly confessed his guilt.

Provision of accommodation

On arrival in Britain the Ukrainians, whether arriving as prisoners of war or EVWs, were housed temporarily in camps. The EVWs, and the ex-prisoners of war who had been given EVW status, were then transferred to suitable hostel accommodation, when it became available, near their place of employment. From there the refugees were encouraged to find private accommodation, usually lodgings. However, some Ukrainians would band together with friends and purchase a house for joint occupation. The numbers of Ukrainians in multiple occupation of houses tended to decline after the mid-1950s when it became possible for more of them to purchase their own properties after saving for the necessary deposit. In rural areas house purchase was more difficult as fewer sources of private accommodation were available, and the prospect of a prolonged residence in a hostel was a further reason for the departure from agricultural employment and further migration to the industrial towns of many Ukrainians.

Religious composition and provision

The Ukrainians, like other minority groups, had to make their own religious provisions. It had been policy that chaplains would not be provided for prisoners of war at public expense but that the costs would be met from the prisoners own welfare funds. Having their own priests in Britain meant that it remained possible for Ukrainians to marry in traditional Ukrainian style but a light-hearted report in the Daily Mirror in December 1947 in its description of the wedding of two Ukrainian EVWs pointed out that the Ukrainian service was the prelude to an "ordinary service in a Methodist Church".³² The Ukrainian community was also able to continue to celebrate religious festivals according to the Julian calendar, with Christmas Day on 7 January, and New Year's Day on 14 January. Employers were often respectful of these differences and allowed Ukrainian workers to take their holidays to coincide with their religious festivals.

The Ukrainian community was also divided by the two religions of its members. The western Ukrainians tended to be Greek Catholic (Uniate), whilst those from the East were Orthodox. These religious divisions continued in the guise of two separate national organizations : the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (Catholic),

and the Federation of Ukrainians in Great Britain (Orthodox). The majority of Ukrainians in Britain came from the West and therefore the Catholic organizations are the largest. As a result, by 1952 there were 14 Roman Catholic priests serving the Ukrainian community in Britain.³³ It has been estimated that approximately 65 per cent of Ukrainians in Britain were Catholic and 35 per cent Orthodox.³⁴ This situation is reversed in Ukraine itself however, where the most popular religion is Orthodoxy.

In the years after resettlement, as the Ukrainian communities in the cities became organized, the larger communities were often able to buy premises to be used as Ukrainian churches, clubs and community centres. Until the purchase of their own churches the Uniate Ukrainians borrowed local Roman Catholic churches, whilst the Orthodox Ukrainians borrowed local Anglican churches. The retention of Ukrainian church services provided the refugees in Britain with an opportunity for them to express their own cultural identity, and to maintain links with other members of the Ukrainian community.

Ukrainian community associations

The Ukrainians who came to Britain were conscious of their Ukrainian nationality whether they originated from

Soviet or Polish Ukraine. As a result, the Polish Ukrainians arriving in Britain after the Second World War tended to disassociate themselves from other Poles and join the new Ukrainian communities being formed in the localities.

The Ukrainian community arriving in Britain after the Second World War had to establish its own associations without help from previous Ukrainian settlers. Prior to 1945 the previous Ukrainian settlement had numbered only 100 people who arrived in 1920 following the Soviet defeat of the Ukrainian Republic.³⁵

The Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain was formed in January 1946 and took on a role in Ukrainian education through Saturday schools for children and grants for Ukrainian students, welfare charities and social activities. The Association also provided free legal advice for its members. In carrying out these functions the Association aimed to work in close co-operation with the appropriate British authorities. The welfare services of the Association were paid for by voluntary contributions from members and were made available to all Ukrainians in Britain whether fee-paying members of the Association or not. Ukrainians who were not disabled but refused to accept employment in Britain were excluded from any welfare provisions. The welfare services of the

Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain were deemed worthy of being placed on record by the National Assistance Board in its Report for the year ending 31 December 1949.³⁶ The Association quickly established itself, encouraging branches to be formed wherever there were twelve or more members of the Ukrainian community in the locality, and groups to be formed where the Ukrainian community numbered fewer than twelve. By 1 January 1951 the Association had 201 branches and 84 groups. Figures for 31 December 1953 showed the Association to have 18,720 active members.³⁷ As Ukrainians began to drift out of agriculture and into the industrial towns the number of branches and groups declined but individual membership increased.

In 1948 the Federation of Ukrainians in Great Britain was formed which had particular interests in welfare and youth projects. For female Ukrainians there was the Association of Ukrainian Women, which by 1954 had sixteen branches.³⁸ During the 1980s this organization was active in the campaign for the release of Ukrainian prisoners of conscience. There were also various other associations, including an Association of Ukrainian Former Combatants in Great Britain formed in September 1949 which had 2,833 members in 89 branches in 1954.³⁹ Numerous choirs and dance troupes also existed, the most famous of these being the Orlyk dance troupe based in

Manchester. Again, as with religious festivals, many employers allowed workers involved in these organizations to take holidays enabling them to participate in festivals and competitions. Expressions of national and cultural identity remained important to the organized community. In 1954 an exhibition of sculptures by Gregory Kruk was organized in London by the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain, with the accompanying statement that "its purpose is the material, cultural, moral and spiritual welfare of the 30,000 Ukrainians in this country".

When the children of the Ukrainians were old enough they were also involved in community life by being sent to special Ukrainian 'Saturday schools' established by the older Ukrainians to teach the second generation born in Britain about their Ukrainian origins. Teachers in these schools were first generation Ukrainians, some of whom had in fact been teachers before their life in exile. These teachers formed their own association, the Ukrainian Teachers' and Educators' Organization in Great Britain. The children were also often members of Ukrainian youth organizations, the most important of these being the Spilka Ukrainskoi Molodi, usually abbreviated to SUM.

However, although the majority of Ukrainians in Britain involved themselves in the Ukrainian community, a few did choose to try and forget their past and submerge themselves in the British community. It is difficult to assess the experiences of these Ukrainians as they are both difficult to trace and prefer not to express opinions on matters regarding Ukraine or Ukrainians in Britain.

Throughout the 1950s the Ukrainian exile organizations arranged some events which would bring its members into contact with the British community, in order to facilitate early settlement. For example, the Organization of Ukrainian Women organized social events to which it encouraged members to bring British friends. There were also 23 Ukrainian sports clubs, mainly in football, and also a number of chess clubs, which organized matches with British teams. In 1953 the Anglo-Ukrainian Society was founded to increase links between the Ukrainian and British communities. In 1959 its membership numbered approximately 700.

A number of Ukrainian publications were produced for the Ukrainian community in Britain, including a weekly newspaper Ukrainska Dumka (Ukrainian Thought). Many of these journals and pamphlets were published by Ukrainian Publishers Ltd which is based in London. The book

publishing department of the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain also increasingly published books about Ukraine in the English language, thus making them accessible to the British relatives of those Ukrainians who had intermarried, and also to the British public generally.

Political activity amongst Ukrainians in Britain

In October 1949 an appeal was issued from Ukraine by the Supreme Ukrainian Liberation Council, and the Ukrainian underground military organizations UPA and OUN, to Ukrainian exiles stating that Ukrainians abroad were expected to continue the fight for independent Ukraine and that:

"Above all, Embattled Ukraine expects Ukrainians abroad to represent their people and their struggle for liberation in a worthy and responsible manner to the rest of the world."⁴⁰

The Ukrainian community in Britain remained faithful to this ideal and, unsurprisingly, the community was extremely hostile in its attitude towards the Soviet Union. The Ukrainians became a leading force within the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations and the Captive Nations organization. Both these umbrella organizations, and the

individual national groups involved, made continued vociferous protests against the Soviet Union. In Britain they gained a great deal of publicity in April 1956 with their protests aimed at the visiting Soviet leaders Khrushchev and Bulganin.

A number of national Ukrainian protest groups were also established, for example, the Ukrainian Protest Committee and the Committee in Defence of Ukrainian and Political Prisoners, both of which were based in London.

Appeals regarding the treatment of Ukraine and its citizens by the Soviet Union were frequently circulated to British Members of Parliament and the British press. MPs with Ukrainians in their constituencies were often quite receptive to these appeals on behalf of Ukrainian prisoners of conscience and involved themselves in the Ukrainian lobby in Parliament which was headed by William Whitlock, one of the Labour Members for Nottingham. Nottingham had long been the centre of many Ukrainian demonstrations based in the north of England. However, much of the prominent support given to Ukrainians by the British came from noticeably right-wing sources, for example Major General J. F. C. Fuller, an ardent opponent of Communism and known to have connections with British fascism during the 1930s.

The anti-Soviet activities did not go unnoticed by the Soviet Union whose secret services applied mildly intimidatory tactics towards the Ukrainians in Britain. One popular method was to mail propaganda to the refugees from an agency in East Berlin inviting them to return to the Soviet Union, and in June 1958 Dr Donald Johnson, a Conservative Member of Parliament, asked the Government if it would make diplomatic representations to have such activities stopped. Replying on behalf of the Foreign Secretary, Commander Allan Noble stated that although the Minister was aware of these activities and that they were a source of "apprehension and distress" to the refugees the Government could not intervene unless the law was actually being broken and that it was doubtful whether any diplomatic representations would be effective in this matter.⁴¹ There were also sporadic condemnations of Ukrainian émigrés which were issued by the Ukrainian Communist Party from within the Soviet Union.

A source of pride to politically active Ukrainians was the election in 1983 of the first Ukrainian as a member of the British Parliament. Stefan Terlezki, Conservative member for Cardiff West, had been a member of Cardiff city council since 1968 and South Glamorgan County Council since 1973. He had also been chairman of Cardiff City Football Club. Terlezki was described by Private Eye as being a 'Russian émigré'. He pursued some

of his interests as a Ukrainian within Parliament, raising issues such as human rights in Ukraine and asking the Government what it was doing to establish links between Britain and Ukraine. A significant number of Conservative MPs have expressed sympathy for Ukraine, and the Conservative Party Conference in October 1983 witnessed the launch of an organization called Conservative Friends of Free Ukraine.

Healthcare

During 1948 there was a great deal of concern shown in Parliament regarding the position of Ukrainian ex-prisoners of war who were found unfit for transfer to European Volunteer Worker status. Of particular concern was the idea that these men would be deported to Germany. As prisoners of war they were transferred to the military hospital at Diss in Norfolk when they became ill. In July 1948 there were 158 Ukrainian patients resident there.⁴² When it became necessary to release them from military custody on 31 December 1948, this date having been set for the removal of all prisoners of war from Britain, the responsibility for the care of the sick Ukrainian prisoners of war was to be passed on to the civil health authorities. However, some deportations of sick Ukrainians had already taken place. For example there was the case of one Ukrainian prisoner of war who

was deported to Germany after he became blind as the result of falling from a farm lorry.⁴³

There were also health problems amongst Ukrainian EVWs. These were of a similar nature to the other national groups entering Britain as EVWs, and involved mainly psychological problems resulting from wartime experiences, and also the lifestyle of the displaced person was of particular concern. Some disturbed EVWs, both Ukrainians and other nationalities, resorted to alcoholism and, in some cases, even suicide. In response to the health problems within the Ukrainian community the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain bought a farm at Chiddingfold in Surrey in September 1949 which it converted into 'Sydenhurst', an invalids' and convalescents' home, paid for and maintained by voluntary contributions from the Association's members.

English language acquisition

The language barrier was a problem for a large number of the Ukrainians, the majority of whom had little, if any, knowledge of the English language before their arrival in Britain. A further problem was the suspicion of interpreters initially used by the authorities.

Language lessons were provided for the Ukrainians as EVWs but, in common with the other EVW groups, attendance was not always good and many acquired only a rudimentary knowledge of English. These classes were often organized by local authorities in areas of Ukrainian settlement but were paid for by the Ministry of Labour. Ukrainians entering the coalmining industry benefited from special English classes organized by the National Coal Board. Approximately 10 per cent of Ukrainians arriving in Britain could speak English and these were deliberately scattered geographically to act as interpreters in localities where there were significant numbers of Ukrainians.

The Ukrainian community itself also provided some English language teaching for its members. The Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain provided classes at its London headquarters and at some of its provincial branches.

The assumption of the authorities was that if intending to settle in Britain the Ukrainians would learn English and, on the basis of this assumption, did not feel bound to provide the Ukrainians with materials in their own language. In May 1951 questions were raised in Parliament about the feasibility of the BBC making foreign radio broadcasts in Ukrainian, possibly with the

help of Ukrainians in Britain who would also like to listen to broadcasts in their own language. Replying for the Government Herbert Morrison, the newly appointed Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, stated that most of the Ukrainians in Ukraine could speak Russian and so were catered for by the Russian broadcasts of the BBC and doubts were expressed about 'letting loose' the Ukrainians in Britain to broadcast to their fellow countrymen still resident in Ukraine.⁴⁴ Questions were again raised concerning this subject in July 1951 when Morrison admitted that representations had been made to him from the Ukrainian community in Britain on the matter but that it was still thought that the positive effects of such broadcasts would be outweighed by the resultant cuts which would have to be made to other services.⁴⁵

Educational opportunities

The question of providing the Ukrainians with some knowledge of the British way of life in addition to the basic aspects of the language was first raised in Parliament by Tom Driberg in July 1948. Chuter Ede replied that in addition to the knowledge they would gain through contacts made with British workers in the course of their employment, some classes were arranged for them by the local education authorities, with assistance from voluntary organizations.⁴⁶ However, as EVWs, there were

few opportunities for first generation Ukrainians in higher education.

A small number of Ukrainians did go on to further full time study. Some took advantage of the scholarship schemes opened to former EVWs by the British Government in 1949 and the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain also established a Students' Assistance Board, which made grants of maintenance and paid university fees for undergraduates. However, the number of Ukrainians entering full time education were small. In common with other groups of former displaced persons their priorities were in establishing themselves and their families financially.

The children of the Ukrainians, the majority of them born in Britain, started to appear in British schools by the late 1950s. Those coming from an all-Ukrainian background often spoke very little English before starting school, Ukrainian being the language which was spoken most frequently in the home.

Social attitudes

(a) Gender distribution and intermarriage

There was a relatively high degree of intermarriage between Ukrainian men and British women. Although Ukrainian women were preferred, they were far outnumbered by the men who were then obliged to marry women of other nationalities. Large numbers therefore married British women, with Italian women also being a popular choice. However, in many of these mixed marriages the Ukrainian customs often continued to be observed, particularly in the encouragement of children to be both aware and proud of their Ukrainian origins.

A reluctance towards intermarriage remained within the community and some first generation Ukrainians were disappointed when their children chose to marry from outside the Ukrainian community.

(b) British perceptions of Ukrainians prior to their arrival in Britain

Those Ukrainians who came to Britain as European Volunteer Workers found that attitudes towards them tended to be governed by their EVW status rather than by their Ukrainian nationality. In August 1946 it was

suggested in a letter to The Times that Ukrainians in the displaced persons' camps on the Continent, who refused to return because of the fear of political or religious persecution, could be used as a temporary labour force in agriculture and mining in Britain in which there was a severe shortage of available British workers. The group were said to be "remarkably useful, industrious and well behaved" and should not be feared as permanent additions to the British population "as they would undoubtedly emigrate in due time to the Americas" where they could join the Ukrainian communities already established there.⁴⁷

Attitudes towards the Ukrainians who came to Britain as prisoners of war benefited from their relatively late arrival in 1947 as by this time many of the restrictions pertaining to ex-enemy personnel had been lifted. During the Second World War fraternization between British civilians and enemy prisoners of war was forbidden, restrictions on contact with the public being relaxed during December 1946, some months before the bulk of the Ukrainian prisoners of war arrived in Britain. However, some restrictions did remain on their behaviour and in November 1947 complaints were sent to the Secretary of State for War by the Parish Council and the Women's Institute of Horbling, Lincolnshire, about the behaviour

after dark of Ukrainians held at the prisoner of war camp there.

Some confusion about the separate identity of Ukraine from Russia and the Soviet Union persisted in some quarters. Such misunderstandings were fostered by the Soviet Union. For example, when Ukraine was admitted to the United Nations at the end of the Second World War it was suggested by the British Government that the two states should exchange diplomatic representatives, however the request was made through the Soviet Government and no reply to the request was subsequently received.

Security screening of Ukrainians entering Britain; its aftermath and the war crimes debate

Although it was known that many of the Balts and Ukrainians who came to Britain after the Second World War had fought on the side of the Axis powers during the course of hostilities, there was only a minimal concern about their activities during their period of military service. European Volunteer Workers had been politically screened on entering the displaced persons camps but there was little further screening by the British authorities of the displaced persons on their volunteering for work in Britain. The Government

justified this at the time by claiming that the screening by officials of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was sufficient. However, these interviews were often undertaken without the presence of a suitable translator because UNRRA and the military authorities lacked sufficient personnel able to speak the appropriate East European languages. In such cases use was made of displaced persons who tended to present translations which were favourable to the case of fellow refugees. Soviet officials were sometimes present at the interviews but their aim was to enforce the repatriation of as many East Europeans as possible and therefore were also unlikely to give unbiased translations. The Western military authorities also had further suspicions that the Soviets were using the screenings for intelligence gathering. Effective screening was often sacrificed to speed up arrival into Britain of the badly needed manpower. In some cases men rejected by National Coal Board doctors because tattoos which identified them as ex-Waffen SS members would be visible in the showers, were allowed to enter into other industries where this would not be the case.⁴⁸

When questioned over the level of screening of the Ukrainians brought to Britain as prisoners of war from Rimini, Hector McNeil told Parliament in June 1947 that a cross-section of the Division concerned had been screened

by the Refugee Screening Commission in February of that year, and that no war criminals had been found amongst them. Barnett Janner asked McNeil if he was aware that "members of this Division were exceptionally brutal, that they murdered hundreds of people in cold blood" and asked whether the necessary steps would be taken to ensure that "none of those who come to this country took part in any of these sadistic and vicious incidents".⁴⁹ McNeil replied with the assurance that "extensive precautions" would be taken to ensure that any criminals would be treated as such and that he was in "no doubt" that these men would undergo further screening processes. The screening of the Ukrainian prisoners of war had been undertaken in Rimini by the Special Refugee Screening Commission under the leadership of Brigadier Fitzroy Maclean. Due to the time constraints imposed on them it was possible for the commission to screen only a cross section of camp residents. Maclean reported to the Foreign Office that a number of them had 'murky war records' and that others admitted to having volunteered for the Waffen SS.⁵⁰ He thought it likely that the proportion of men claiming to originate from Polish rather than Soviet Ukraine was much higher than was in fact the case but proving this point would be extremely difficult. Maclean also stated that the repatriation of these men to the Soviet Union would involve a major military operation as all the inmates of the camp would

participate in active resistance to any such moves. It was recommended by the screening commission that the men be turned into displaced persons in order to protect them from the Soviets and that some place of refuge should be found for them.

In view of the confusion which ensued in the aftermath of the Second World War the laxity of the screening process of displaced persons entering Britain becomes more understandable, particularly if one also considers the desperate need for additional labour which was necessary for the country's economic reconstruction. It has also been alleged that the authorities chose to ignore the war records of some East Europeans with the long-term view of the possibility of later using them as spies for Britain as the onset of the Cold War became increasingly apparent.⁵¹ In addition to this, the conflict between Jews in Palestine and the British occupying forces, combined with the association of Jews with the black market in Britain, created antisemitic feeling in some circles which in turn resulted in some antipathy towards the prosecution of large numbers of perpetrators of war crimes against the Jews. At the time of the liberation of the Nazi concentration and death camps and the war crimes trials at Nuremburg information made available to the general public was restricted due to a combination of the lack of newsprint available and a squeamish Press

reluctant to reveal to its readers the full extent of the atrocities. In addition, the scale of the crimes seemed incomprehensible to many. It was not until the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1960-61 that popular interest was stimulated in the atrocities committed against Jews during the Second World War.

Regarding specific claims of brutality by the Ukrainian 'Galizien Division', Christopher Mayhew, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, stated in Parliament that the Ukrainians brought to Britain as prisoners of war were in fact members of the 1st Ukrainian Division of the Wehrmacht rather than the Galizien Division which had ceased to exist after the Battle of Brody in July 1944. However, to satisfy those who thought some of the Ukrainians may be implicated in war crimes there would be further screening of the men in Britain.⁵²

The war crimes issue

However, this was not the end of the war crimes issue which was to rise to prominence again in the 1980s and, although this thesis concentrates on the 1950s, it is important to follow this theme through.

In March 1979 John Tomlinson gave an assurance to Parliament that the Government placed no limit on the

initiation of legal proceedings or the imposition of penalties with respect to war crimes and crimes against humanity.⁵³ The calls in Parliament for legislation to deal with war criminals continued to gather momentum and in November 1986 the All-Party Parliamentary War Crimes Group was formed, significantly one of its members being Stefan Terlezki who himself came from a Ukrainian background.

At the same time the Press were also voicing increasing support for measures to be taken, particularly after the release of 17 names by the Simon Wiesenthal Center and 34 names by the Soviet Union of alleged Nazi war criminals living in Britain. In addition to newspaper coverage there was some television exposure, including a widely publicised programme by Scottish Television. In some cases the names of men suspected were revealed in the Press. There were calls from the Labour front bench to put a stop to these revelations under the rules governing sub judice, but the reply came from the Home Secretary that such newspaper comment could not be prevented.⁵⁴ However, in any such cases the jury would in the end have to decide whether the trial had been fair.

In July 1987 in a statement on the the policy towards war crimes, the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd confirmed that Britain would consider the extradition of people accused

of war crimes abroad, but not to the Soviet Union and that previous requests by the Soviet Union for extraditions had been refused in the 1960s and 1970s. It was also stated that Britain had received from the Simon Wiesenthal Center documentary material in support of allegations that people responsible for war crimes were living in Britain. The material was being examined to assess the scope for further action.⁵⁵ There were 17 names on the Simon Wiesenthal list, of which ten were still thought to be alive within the United Kingdom, with a further 34 names on a list provided by Scottish Television, of whom seven were thought to still be living within the United Kingdom.⁵⁶ However, it would not be possible for the men accused in these documents to be extradited as all the crimes were committed within territory controlled by the Soviet Union after 1945, a country with which Britain had no extradition treaty. As the law stood there could also be no trial in Britain of these men for crimes committed abroad before they became either British citizens or long-term residents of Britain.

The decision was taken in February 1988 to review the position regarding alleged war criminals and an independent inquiry into the matter, costing £500,000, was undertaken by Sir Thomas Hetherington, former Director of Public Prosecutions, and William Chalmers,

former Crown Agent in Scotland, to assess whether a change in the law would be worthwhile to facilitate the trial in Britain of alleged war criminals.⁵⁷ There was much general support for the establishment of the inquiry but it was not universal. For example, Ivor Stanbrook, Conservative member for Orpington, thought that it was a bad decision which he feared would lead to a witch-hunt.⁵⁸ In this he was supported by Harry Ewing, Member for Falkirk, East, who although expressing sympathy for the victims of the atrocities and the relatives, asked

"what is to be achieved by putting on trial people of 80 years of age or more and, assuming that they are found guilty, sending them to prison for the rest of their natural lives ? What on earth can be achieved by that sort of approach ?"⁵⁹

In contrast to this was an article in The Economist in favour of prosecutions which stated that not attempting prosecution

"would mean telling the world Britain has forgiven - or, worse, forgotten. Some crimes are too foul for human forgiveness; some lessons too serious ever to be forgotten."⁶⁰

The popular view was that justice against Nazi war criminals had not been thoroughly carried out at the end of the Second World War and that, far from being vengeful, justice was overdue. This was tempered by the acknowledgment amongst many who held this opinion that there were serious problems with the validity of much of the evidence, some of which would come from the Soviet Union, whose record on human rights made it a doubtful source, and other evidence being difficult to disentangle due to the length of time since the events in question took place. However, the other major countries which took Eastern European migrants in the immediate post-war years, Australia, Canada and the United States, all had powers to prosecute alleged war criminals and like Britain did not have a statute of limitations which would have meant that too much time had elapsed between the crime and the prosecution.

The Hetherington Report was published in July 1989. The report was in two parts, the main report which was published contained the analysis and conclusions of the inquiry team, the second report which was not intended for publication examined in detail individual cases. The inquiry recommended that the law be changed to enable prosecution in Britain of people currently resident in the country who committed war crimes in German-occupied territory during the Second World War. In three of the

individual cases it had investigated the inquiry team concluded that there was enough evidence to mount a prosecution. Extradition of alleged war criminals to the Soviet Union was not recommended. Labour's shadow home secretary, Roy Hattersley, called for the legislation to be made more general and provide for the prosecution of war criminals from any war not just those of the Second World War as was the case in other countries which had legislated to provide for the prosecution of war criminals. This view was also supported by the Social and Liberal Democratic Party. However, this was seen by the Government to be too problematic: it preferred instead to concentrate on the recommendations of the Hetherington inquiry into Second World War criminals only.⁶¹

Subsequently, legislation was introduced which provided for the possible prosecution of suspected war criminals from the Second World War. The legislation was passed in the Commons by a large majority on a free vote. However, there was some opposition to the Bill as it was presented, particularly in the House of Lords where many Lords expressed reservations regarding the likelihood of a fair trial for anyone accused of such crimes. It was the practicalities rather than the principle of the Bill which came most into question. Those who objected to the War Crimes Bill frequently reiterated their repulsion of

antisemitism (indeed a number of those who opposed the Bill were in fact Jewish) and the crimes involved but found they could not put aside their doubts that a fair trial would be difficult to achieve. Problems relating to the memory and availability of witnesses due to the time which had lapsed since the crimes occurred, and also the availability of sufficient facilities and time which would be made available to the defence, were among the concerns which were expressed. The Hetherington-Chalmers Report had addressed itself to the possibility of conviction rather than of fair trial. The Spectator described the Bill as "fundamentally misconceived", believing that fair trials would be difficult to achieve, with comparisons being drawn to the overturning of verdicts passed on people convicted of Irish terrorist activities, there being a "risk of unsafe verdicts in highly charged cases".⁶² However, The Guardian put forward the view that the failure of the Bill in the House of Lords would result in there being a time limit on mass murder when one did not exist in individual cases of murder and that this would represent "a shameful message to the world which the Commons should not hesitate to put into reverse".⁶³ However, in other sources concern was expressed that discrimination was being shown to one particular group when the Western forces, Soviets, Italians, Japanese, and later war criminals such as those in Cambodia, were excluded.

Concern was also expressed by some who believed the Bill to be introducing retrospective legislation, for which there was traditionally little sympathy in British Parliaments. The House of Lords remained a stumbling block to the passage of the Bill and the Commons found it necessary to invoke the Parliament Act of 1949 for the legislation to come into force. The Bill received the royal assent on 10 May 1991.⁶⁴

During the inquiry into the existence of alleged war criminals living in Britain there was extensive publicity surrounding the issue and the results of the Hetherington Report received detailed coverage in the popular Press. In addition, as far as the Ukrainian community was concerned, on an international level there was also a great deal of publicity pertaining to the John Demjanjuk trial which was taking place in Israel following his deportation from the United States of America which had stripped him of his American citizenship. The Ukrainian and Baltic communities were distressed by the publicity as they believed the allegations concerning a small number of individuals reflected badly on the whole community. However, it was the rumour and general publicity to which they objected and not the prosecution of actual war criminals. For example Lord Cocks of Hartcliffe stated that Ukrainians in St Helens had made a number of representations to their MP that "they were

very much in favour of action being taken on the lines proposed by the Government."⁶⁵ There was also some concern amongst the Ukrainian community that evidence supporting some of the allegations against individuals was mainly supplied by the Soviet Union and therefore there was a possibility that it could be propaganda rather than evidence.

Concern that publicity surrounding the war crimes issue should not reflect on the Ukrainian and Baltic communities as a whole were also expressed by members of both Houses of Parliament. Merlyn Rees, chairman of the all-party group on war crimes was keen to point out that from the Ukrainian and Baltic communities most of the people who came to Britain after the war were considered to be "first-rate citizens" but that it should not be ignored that a small minority amongst them might have been guilty of mass murder contravening international laws governing conduct in time of war, and these people should not be allowed to get away with it. Douglas Hurd was also keen to stress that the East European communities were well respected and contained many thousands of "admirable and loyal citizens".⁶⁶ A conclusion which, after the initial difficulties of being regarded as competitors by the indigenous population, appears to have entered into general circulation.

9. THE RESPONSES IN BRITAIN TO THE HUNGARIAN REFUGEES 1956-7

Although Hungarians entered Britain as European Volunteer Workers in the years immediately after the Second World War, they were small in number and went relatively unnoticed amongst the mass of Poles, Ukrainians, Balts, Germans and Italians also arriving at this time. In contrast, the refugees following the Hungarian uprising of 1956 arrived in a blaze of publicity, and it is on this group which this chapter concentrates.

1956 : The responses of the British Government and the arrival of the Hungarians in Britain

The British Government responded quickly to the Hungarian refugee question. On 5 November 1956, the day after Soviet tanks had begun to attack Budapest and Imre Nagy had been forced to seek refuge in the Yugoslav embassy, there was already talk in the House of Commons of "offering hospitality to a substantial proportion of the 10,000 refugees who have had to flee from the Russian tyranny."¹ This was seen as the best way in which Britain could help the Hungarians; direct intervention was impractical as it would risk a possible war with Russia. For similar reasons it was also decided that it was necessary to keep in contact with the Soviets. It

was further decided that, although it disapproved of the Kadar Government which took control after the suppression of the uprising, it would not be prudent to impose sanctions on Hungary as this would only cause more suffering to the Hungarian people as a whole. In 1962 the British Government went further in strengthening its links with Hungary by introducing a programme of cultural exchanges.

By 7 November 1956 the British Government was already investigating the possibility of receiving 2,500 of the Hungarian refugees and in this it had the full support of the other parliamentary parties. However, this was not a rigidly fixed figure and was to be kept under review as further information came through from Austria with reference to the extent of the problem. This resulted in the Government announcement on 23 November that, after a request from Austria, it was to waive the original limit of 2,500. By 11 December 1956 approximately 11,000 Hungarians had arrived² which, with the exception of Austria, was the largest number any country had received. Such a large number of refugees in so short a space of time had not originally been planned for and consequently congestion had occurred at the reception centres and it was necessary to suspend temporarily the admittance of more refugees until the accommodation problem had been resolved. This did not take long and at the United

Nations General Assembly on 10 January 1957 the United Kingdom's representative said that the country was prepared to take a further 5,000 Hungarians.³ Of this 5,000 the Inter-Governmental Committee for European Migration could only afford transportation for 550 of them, the rest were brought here by the British Government at the cost of £32,000. By March 1957 it was being estimated in official quarters that approximately 19,000 Hungarian refugees had been admitted to Britain.⁴

Emigration and repatriation

By the end of 1956, having received such a large number of refugees, the Government felt it could not accept any more until some of those Hungarians only in Britain temporarily had departed for the countries in which they wished to settle permanently.⁵ This referred in particular to the 5,000 Hungarians who, in December 1956, Canada had promised to take from Britain in the Spring of 1957. In November 1956 it had originally been planned that Western European countries could help the situation in Austria, which was finding it difficult to cope with the large numbers of Hungarians crossing the border, by temporarily taking refugees who hoped to eventually settle in non-European countries. It was known that many of the refugees wanted to go to Australia, New Zealand, and the United States of America. The British Council

for Aid to Refugees estimated that approximately one-half of the Hungarians that came to Britain in November and December 1956 wished to emigrate elsewhere.⁶ However, except for Canada, countries continued to restrict their intake of refugees to those who came directly from Austria. After Britain lifted its suspension on the admittance of refugees in January 1957 only those wanting to settle permanently in Britain were accepted, and this was made clear to the refugees when they were given individual interviews whilst still in Austria. By 10 April 1957 the United Kingdom had received 21,000 Hungarian refugees, of whom 15,000 intended to settle permanently in the country.⁷ Few refugees were added to this total so that by 20 February 1958 21,667 Hungarian refugees had arrived in the United Kingdom since 28 October 1956, of whom 14,710 remained.⁸

Of those who had left Britain the majority had emigrated to other Western nations although some had in fact returned to Hungary. The British Council for Aid to Refugees reported that even as early as January 1957 a few of the refugees were wanting to return.⁹ The British Government did not prevent those wanting to go back from doing so; it was felt that it was the responsibility of the Hungarian authorities to grant permission enabling such people to return. By 17 February 1957 only 121 refugees had returned to Hungary.¹⁰ Reports in The Daily

Express and The Daily Herald accused those refugees wanting to go back to Hungary as being members of the Hungarian secret police. This was refuted by the Hungarian Legation in London who said that it was:

"ridiculous, and at the same time slanderous, to classify as 'members of the Hungarian secret police' those Hungarians who wished to return to their families and their homeland as soon as possible." 11

The Hungarian Legation wanted to help those refugees wishing to return to Hungary, saying that these people were feeling disappointed after having been misled about life in the West and had realised "their mistake in leaving"¹². In many ways this may have been true as the first experience of Hungarians in Britain in 1956 was life in the refugee camps, something which did not resemble the prosperous Western lifestyle they may have heard about whilst in the East. By 20 February 1958 1,214 of the refugees had returned to Hungary¹³ either disillusioned with life in Britain or missing family and friends back home. This figure had risen to approximately 2,000 by 1 June 1961.¹⁴

Arrivals from the camps in Yugoslavia

It is interesting that throughout 1956 and 1957 the British Government had a noticeably different attitude towards accepting refugees from Austria and towards accepting them from Yugoslavia. The Government claimed that this was because it had originally been in Austria that there was a large-scale arrival of refugees. Indeed, there is a good deal of truth in this claim. Up to 10 December 1956 Austria had received 126,000 refugees whilst up to 7 December only 859 Hungarians had fled to Yugoslavia. However, whilst the number of refugees in Austria began to decline, only 69,491 remained in the country by 19 December, the number in Yugoslavia continued to increase. This situation did not go unnoticed and on 21 February 1957 in the House of Commons Barnett Janner asked why Britain was not taking refugees from Yugoslavia.¹⁵ By 8 April 1957 the number of refugees in Yugoslavia had increased to 18,000 and the United Nations felt it necessary to issue an appeal for countries to take some of these refugees. The British Government responded by stating that it had already made a "considerable contribution" to solving the refugee problem and was "not normally a country of immigration".¹⁶ The language used in this statement is clearly less sympathetic in tone than the reply of:

"Her Majesty's Government support the programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for the resettlement of these refugees"¹⁷

which was given when questioned about the Hungarian refugees still in Austria in December 1957. Even bearing in mind that Austria received nine times more Hungarian refugees than Yugoslavia, Britain still took proportionally less of its intake from Yugoslavia than it did from Austria. On 4 July 1957 Viscount Colville of Culross spoke on this subject in the House of Lords, pointing out that although 500 of the refugees in Yugoslavia had selected Britain as the country they would like to enter, only 50 had been allowed into the country to date, and another 50 were expected to arrive shortly.¹⁸ On 28 December 1957 the Government announced that a further 200 Hungarians were to be allowed into Britain from Yugoslavia to replace the 200 refugees leaving Britain for Australia.¹⁹ However, this apparent discrimination was not only present in Britain; most countries seem to have been more reluctant to take refugees from Yugoslavia than from Austria and there was also more financial aid given to Austria from the West than was given to the Yugoslavs. This was a result of the political climate of the time; during the Cold War Western countries were more willing to provide aid to a

fellow Western country, Austria, than a member of the Eastern bloc, Yugoslavia. There was also increased suspicion by the Western powers that refugees arriving from Yugoslavia were more likely to be Communist spies than refugees arriving from camps in Austria.

Security measures on arrival

On account of the urgency of the situation and the accumulation of large numbers of refugees Britain along with countries such as Switzerland, Sweden and Holland waived its usual immigration restrictions when accepting the refugees, allowing them to come to Britain without having had individual interviews. This was a popular move at the time but by 13 December 1956 concern was already being expressed about the possibility of Hungarian Communist agents coming into Britain along with the refugees.²⁰ This prompted Major Lloyd-George to declare that the Government had in fact made security arrangements to prevent such a thing from happening.²¹

A small party of 61 Hungarian refugees, including 14 children, arrived in London on 17 November 1956 with the first large party of Hungarian refugees arriving in London on the following day. The British Red Cross, in consultation with the International Committee for European Migration, had made the arrangements for the

transportation from Austria of this group. On entry into Britain all the refugees had to register themselves with the police and give some information about themselves. The authorities realised that many of them might be reluctant to do this for fear of reprisals on the family they had left behind in Hungary and so gave official assurances that none of the information imparted by the refugees would be passed on to any foreign organization or government.

Security checks on the Hungarians were initially minimal and took place at the port of entry; the refugees were then issued with an identification document. The lack of screening in the early period of arrival resulted in some rumours of the possibility of Communist spies arriving in Britain amongst the refugees. On 2 December 1956 the Sunday Express carried the story "Could there be a spy amongst the refugees?". The writer of the article expressed sympathy for the refugees and did not wish to see them "unduly badgered" by the authorities but at the same time felt that the authorities concerned should ensure that careful screening of the refugees did take place. After these security scares it was arranged for a team of immigration officials to be sent to the camps in Austria to screen the refugees before they were accepted for resettlement in Britain. In October 1957 to lay remaining fears to rest a further screening of Hungarian

refugees in the United Kingdom was undertaken by the Immigration officers.

Later arrivals

Apart from limiting the numbers of refugees allowed into the country at certain times, no restrictions were actually placed on which individuals to accept until June 1957. After this point only those refugees who qualified under the Distressed Relatives Scheme of 1945 were to be allowed into Britain.²² As a consequence of the imposition of the Distressed Relatives Scheme²³ the Hungarians arriving after June 1957 were usually dependant relatives of refugees already settled in Britain. However, not all relatives could obtain the relevant paperwork and one woman attempting to join her uncle in Britain waded ashore after being dropped by a small boat somewhere near Dover.²⁴

An incident which aroused public interest was the illegal arrival in Britain of eleven Hungarian stowaways from Brazil who were given permission by the Home Secretary to remain in the country in January 1958. The decision not to deport these three families was given only after a careful consideration of the possible effects on one of the women who was eight months pregnant. One of the men, on hearing of this decision, commented "We are deeply

grateful to the English people and Press who have made this case", to which an editorial in The Times replied that they should indeed feel grateful to Britain "for offering them hospitality which we may fairly say they would have been unlikely to get anywhere else in the world".²⁵ The child was eventually named after the Home Secretary, R. A. Butler, and the MP Anthony Greenwood who had appealed on behalf of allowing the stowaways to stay in Britain. Greenwood was also godfather at the Christening.

Similar stories followed in the 1960s. The most prominent Hungarian applicant for British residence in this period being Elizabeth Vigh who had represented Hungary at three Olympic games in the javelin and discuss events.²⁶ Not all applications to remain in Britain made by Hungarians were granted. During the 1970s stories of refugees from Hungary tended to focus on defectors to the West in general rather than those applying to remain in Britain. This was a reflection of the small numbers involved. In August 1974 it was reported that a British lorry driver had been found guilty of trying to smuggle a Hungarian girl to the West in his lorry and had been sentenced to four months' imprisonment.²⁷

The numbers arriving in Britain after 1957 were few. In 1973 only seven Hungarians applied for political asylum

in Britain²⁸ and by the early 1980s applications made to the British Government by Hungarians seeking asylum appear to have averaged out to approximately 20 per year. Decisions on these applications were not always quickly received and were not always given Government assent.²⁹ The numbers of Hungarians applying for naturalization also fell during the 1970s.³⁰

Organized reception of the refugees

The reception of the refugees was made the responsibility of the British Council for Aid to Refugees who coordinated their efforts with other voluntary organizations and was kept in close contact with relevant government departments through the existence of a parliamentary Inter-Departmental Working Party. On 9 November 1956 the British Council for Aid to Refugees was awarded a £10,000 government grant to cover administrative expenses.³¹ When the refugees first began to arrive the Council had only five members of staff but by January 1957, as the organization tried to cope with the large numbers of refugees coming into Britain, this had been increased to 140 staff.³² The British Council for Aid to Refugees received further financial assistance from the Lord Mayor of London's Fund set up to help the Hungarians but by the end of August 1957 the Council had exhausted almost all of its funds and the Government

decided that from 1 October 1957 responsibility for maintaining the refugees should pass from the Council to the National Assistance Board. Voluntary organizations other than the British Council for Aid to Refugees, for example the Red Cross, the St John's Ambulance Brigade and the United Nations Association, also played an important role in welcoming and maintaining the refugees. These organizations received much praise from both the British people and the Hungarians themselves.

Popular sympathy

On their arrival there was much popular sympathy for the Hungarians who were seen as heroic freedom fighters. This sympathy was fuelled by reports in the Press about the situation in Hungary, the heroism of the freedom fighters and the plight of the refugees. The tabloid newspapers also made extensive use of emotive photographs of the refugees, particularly women and children, arriving in Austria and later in Britain.³³ The caption under one photograph of a Hungarian girl in a reception camp in Britain read that although now safe in England "those tragic eyes in a little girl's face hold the horror of a broken home, a shattered town, a murdered nation."³⁴ Hungarian men featured in the reports and photographs tended to be those who had sustained injuries

during the fighting. The behaviour of the Press at the reception camps in Austria did not however go unquestioned. One correspondent to The Times who had been a volunteer worker there in December 1956 complained about the intrusive behaviour of many members of the British Press, and their insensitivity in the quest for the best photographs. He went on to ask "Can nothing be done by the Press Council to stop this attitude of 'anything for a good story'?"³⁵ The deliberate omission of a photograph of Hungarian refugees was also used to some effect by the Daily Mirror in December 1956. The newspaper had been featuring a series of 'Comedian of the Year', 'Face of the Year' etc, and for 'Picture of the Year' it had chosen a photograph of twenty Hungarian refugees enjoying a party held for them by the newspaper at the Hungarian restaurant in London. However, the newspaper explained that it could not publish the picture because the refugees still had relatives in Hungary and did not want to jeopardize their safety by being recognized. The report explained that it hoped one day to be able to print a photograph of these people being reunited with their families. Political cartoonists also commented on the situation, for example a drawing by Vicky in the Daily Mirror showed an old woman and two children accompanied by the quote "'Fascist and reactionary elements have been crushed' - Soviet-controlled Budapest Radio."³⁶ Television also played its

part in heightening public sympathy for the refugees. On 11 November 1956 the BBC made a live television broadcast from a transit camp for Hungarian refugees at Traiskirchen in Austria.

Demonstrations in support of the Hungarian people were organized by university students in Cardiff and Leeds, and more than 1,000 London University students protested outside the Soviet Embassy, with mounted police having to drive back over 100 demonstrators who tried to charge police guarding the Embassy. One student demonstrator, having been prevented by police from reaching the Embassy, attempted to march on the offices of The Daily Worker, the newspaper of the Communist Party of Great Britain, before again finding police blocking the way. After a mass demonstration of several thousand students and Hungarian exiles in Hyde Park on 11 November 1956, 200 students marched to the offices of the Communist Party of Great Britain in Covent Garden and milk bottles were thrown at the offices' windows.

There was also talk of British university students going over to Hungary to participate in the fighting. In November 1956 the British Universities Volunteer Force began seeking volunteers to fight in Hungary, and called on other Western European universities to do the same until a projected force of 20,000 students were

available. A British Universities Committee was formed by students from Nottingham University and the London School of Economics to discuss the possibility of such a student force. This committee discussed its ideas with the United Kingdom Committee for the Assistance of Hungarian Freedom Fighters, the main aim of which was to collect money and clothing for the Hungarians. However, despite a great deal of support amongst British students for the Hungarian rebels there were few who actually went so far as volunteering to help in the fighting. For example there were only 20 volunteers at Nottingham University.

Many people shared the sentiments expressed by Michael-Vincent Korda of Magdalen College, Oxford in a letter to The Spectator, 23 November 1956, in which he said that by not actively supporting the rebels at the time of the uprising we had failed the Hungarian people and that we must help the refugees. Some were also of the opinion that Britain's action in Suez had encouraged the Soviet Union in its decision to intervene in Hungary. Indeed, it is possible that, with regards to the action in Suez, its failure marked the start of a new era in which Britain began to look more towards its place in Europe rather than in the Commonwealth, and that this shift in attitudes was beneficial to the Hungarian refugees in terms of Britain's response to them.

Numerous, more peaceful, expressions of sympathy were also made at this time. A delegation of Labour leaders visited the Soviet Ambassador in London to express their 'profound shock and horror' at events in Hungary,³⁷ and resolutions of sympathy for the Hungarian people were made by several political organizations, one example of this being the Southampton Labour Party. The Archbishop of Canterbury also joined in the expressions of sympathy by asking for prayers for Hungary on Remembrance Sunday. Hungarian exiles in Britain were allowed to take part in the Remembrance service in London in 1956 and lay a special wreath at the Cenotaph in memory of the freedom fighters. There was also the idea of sending a peaceful Youth Pilgrimage on foot from London to Hungary in protest at the Soviet intervention.³⁸

After the arrival in Britain of the first groups of Hungarian refugees a meeting was organized at the Royal Albert Hall in London by the European-Atlantic group under the slogan 'Britain stands by Hungary'. There were a number of speakers, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, but guests of honour at the meeting were 17 Hungarian men and women who had fought with the freedom fighters. The Hungarians, fearing reprisals on relatives still in Hungary, appeared on stage wearing masks to avoid recognition and received a "thunderous reception" from the audience.³⁹

The plight of the Hungarians had grabbed the British imagination and this resulted in what the British Council for Aid to Refugees described as an "overwhelming response" by the public when called on to help the refugees.⁴⁰ In the House of Commons Dr. Horace King went as far as to say:

"The British people are rising to the humanitarian appeal of the Hungarian refugees on a scale unequalled, I think, in peacetime."⁴¹

In fact, the response was so overwhelming that on 27 December 1956 one Hungarian refugee in Notting Hill, London was in court for being drunk and disorderly on Boxing Day after having been plied with twenty whiskies by the "kind English" in one public house.⁴² There was also the case in Surrey of one former member of the Communist Party of Great Britain who was charged with being drunk and disorderly after he had felt it necessary to 'salve his conscience' with alcohol as a result of the guilt he believed all Communist Party members should share over the events in Hungary.⁴³

In addition to these expressions of sympathy it was also necessary to cancel a visit to Britain of the Russian ice hockey team in "deference to public opinion",⁴⁴ the

Sadler's Wells Ballet company cancelled a planned visit to Moscow, and the Bar Council and Law Society cancelled an invitation to a delegation of Soviet lawyers who were to have visited Britain. The British-Soviet Friendship Society also cancelled some of its events until the international situation had improved. By February 1957 calls started being made for the re-establishment of cultural exchanges with the Soviet Union. It was felt that, although gestures of sympathy for the Hungarian people had been important, the suspension of cultural exchanges with the Soviet people should not continue indefinitely as it was not in the interests of international relations.

There was a resurgent interest in Britain towards the Hungarians and events in Hungary when news of the execution of former Hungarian leader Imre Nagy reached the country in June 1958. The matter was discussed in Parliament and letters flooded in to The Times. The majority of these letters expressed either shock or dismay at the execution, but one writer claimed to have no sympathy for Nagy who had "helped create the monster which took his life".⁴⁵ There was also a protest march by 200 Hungarian students in London. The organizers of the march intended to present a resolution of protest at the Hungarian Legation but were prevented from reaching the Legation by the police. Condemnation of the

executions of the Hungarian leaders was also forthcoming from the British trades unions. The TUC General Council passed a resolution expressing "shock and horror" at the executions, there being only two dissentients by the Fire Brigades' Union. The executive council of the AEU expressed "revulsion and horror", whilst Arthur Horner, Communist general secretary of the NUM described the execution of Nagy and his colleagues as "needless folly". The general secretary of the London Typographical Society withdrew from a Printing and Kindred Trades Federation delegation to the Soviet Union as he did not want to be thought of as condoning the executions.⁴⁶

After 1958 interest in the Hungarian situation dwindled and was re-ignited only sporadically. In March 1960 a memorial tablet depicting a scene of Budapest in 1956 was unveiled at the Polish community club in Princes Gate, London. Newspaper interest in the uprising occurred on its tenth and twentieth anniversaries with the events of 1956 being described in letters and articles.⁴⁷

The financial response and charity activities in aid of the refugees

The immediate response to the refugees in monetary terms was very positive. By 21 November 1956 the British Government had contributed a total of £110,000 for the

aid of refugees both here and abroad.⁴⁸ This figure had risen to approximately £263,000 by 25 January 1957.⁴⁹ By 6 March the total contribution had risen again to equal £355,000, of which £230,000 was being spent on the resettlement of refugees in Britain.⁵⁰ After this, despite an appeal on 12 March by the United Nations Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Refugees, the British Government decided that it could give no more money for helping refugees in Austria and Yugoslavia.

However, it was not only the Government that donated money to Hungarian relief, there was also a generous response from the general public who had raised £450,000 by 19 November 1956.⁵¹ There were various organizations which made collections for Hungarian relief, the largest of these being the fund launched by the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Cullum Welch, on 9 November 1956 at a banquet at which the Soviet Ambassador was present. By 5 December 1956 donations to this national appeal had reached a figure of £1,145,000. By the time it was wound up in September 1958 the fund had reached a total of £2,609,434.⁵² One-third of this money was to be spent outside Britain but the remainder was available to aid projects for Hungarians who had found refuge in Britain.⁵³ There was also a collection organized by the Trades Union Congress, the leaders of which stated "sympathy must now be measured not in words but in

pounds".⁵⁴ Several trades unions contributed to this appeal, for example, the Transport and General Workers Union had given £5,000 by 16 November 1956 and by 31 January 1957 the National Union of Mineworkers had donated £15,000. The general council of the Trades Union Congress did not however accept a proposal for an international boycott of Soviet goods and services. This was not a reflection of a lack of sympathy for the Hungarians but was due to opposition to take industrial action on political grounds, difficulties in applying such a boycott and the potentially serious economic effects on workers in other European countries. An appeal was also launched by the Labour Party, and restaurants in Soho operated a scheme whereby a small donation to Hungarian relief was added to the bill. In addition to these appeals people also donated money to the Red Cross, to which Britain was internationally the seventh largest contributor. Donations to Hungarian relief came from contributors as diverse as Queen Elizabeth, the Bank of England, and the Scottish football clubs Glasgow Celtic and Heart of Midlothian. There was also a special edition of the Picture Post entitled 'Cry Hungary' which gave an account of the events in Hungary in 1956, the profits of which were donated to the Lord Mayor of London's relief fund.

However, this generous response to Hungarian relief was not wholly unanimous. Some objections were raised from the greeting card industry to sales of a charity card in aid of Hungarian relief at Christmas 1956 and there was also the case of an unscrupulous individual who stole a mail bag from the London headquarters of the United Nations Association which contained donations to their relief fund.

The generosity of the general public, both in Britain and other Western countries, meant that the immediate needs of the refugees were soon provided for. These needs ranged from the drugs and medical equipment donated by pharmacists, drug-houses and hospitals, to the cigarettes provided by the soldiers at an army camp in Colchester for the refugees housed there. As well as donating money many people also gave old clothing and bedding for distribution amongst the refugees. There was also a call by the Library Association for books written in Hungarian to be passed on to local libraries. One other basic need of the Hungarians, that of information about missing relatives, was harder to satisfy. However, the problem was partly solved when the International Red Cross set up a central index of all Hungarian refugees. Also, the British Broadcasting Corporation broadcast messages of no more than twelve words from refugees to relatives in Hungary. This was done using nicknames and pseudonyms so

that there would be no reprisals on those still in Hungary.

Hostility towards Hungarian refugees

One section of the population in which there was a mixed reaction to the events in Hungary and the refugees who subsequently came to Britain was amongst the membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain. The Communist Party itself, like that in France, refused to condemn the Soviet intervention and this resulted in a number of members, particularly trade unionists and university members, leaving the party. John Horner, general secretary of the Fire Brigades' Union, resigned from the Party, and at a three county conference of firemen held in Newcastle there were calls for all officials of the Fire Brigades Union connected to the Communist Party to resign. The executive of the National Union of Mineworkers passed a resolution condemning Soviet aggression in Hungary. However, miners' leader Arthur Horner decided "after careful thought" to remain loyal to the Communist Party whilst maintaining that, in his view, Communist countries should be allowed to develop in their own way without pressures from outside.⁵⁵ The Electrical Trades Union also kept its Communist president Frank Foulkes, but the union itself passed resolutions in support of the Hungarian people and condemned the Soviet

intervention at its annual conference in June 1957. The Communist Club at Oxford University was forced to disband after a significant number of resignations. In an interview on the television programme 'Panorama' shown on 10 December 1956 the general secretary of the Communist Party of Great Britain, John Gollan, said that 590 members had resigned since the uprising. The programme estimated that three per cent of the total membership of 34,000 might eventually resign due to the events in Hungary. However, the Party believed that those leaving the Party "are profoundly mistaken and that, as events unfold, many will deeply regret that they took such steps."⁵⁶ In a Daily Mirror editorial, commenting on the acceptance of the Moscow line on Hungary by the leaders of the Communist Party of Great Britain and Party organ the Daily Worker, asked the question "When are these dupes going to come to their senses ?"⁵⁷ Meanwhile, the Ashington branch of the Communist Party in Northumberland broke away from national policy and decided to condemn the Soviet action in Hungary.

After the initial sympathy for the Hungarian people there was a change in attitude amongst some of the indigenous population when the refugees had been in Britain a few months. Traditional British xenophobia soon reappeared in certain sections of the community. One Hungarian refugee of the time later wrote "English people have a

tendency to look on foreigners as potential hell-raisers".⁵⁸ This resurgence of xenophobic attitudes was due in part to the age and gender distribution of the refugees. Before their arrival it had been expected that there would be a number of unaccompanied children and the Save the Children Fund had been inundated with money. There were also many offers of homes for the children, coming from both individuals and official organizations. For example, Dr. Barnado's offered places for 50 children until more permanent homes could be found for them, there was an offer of 100 homes by the Church of England Children's Society and the International Help for Children organization had received 70 offers to take children for varying periods of time.⁵⁹ However, by 4 December 1956 no unaccompanied children had come to Britain and there were even very few families. The majority of unaccompanied children had been taken to Switzerland, although it was later revealed that approximately 100 children had in fact arrived unregistered in Britain accompanied by adults who were not their parents. Some of these returned to their families in Hungary whilst the remainder were found homes by the British Council for Aid to Refugees. Of the refugees who arrived in Britain by 19 December 1956, 77 per cent were male and of these 89 per cent were under the age of 38, and 67 per cent were aged between 18 and 38.⁶⁰ Even by the time of the census of 1961, of the

17,938 Hungarians resident in Britain nearly 62 per cent were male.⁶¹ This predominance of young, single men amongst the Hungarians resulted in some young, single British men feeling threatened by their presence. One, more surprising, source of opposition came from the National Conference of Labour Women held in April 1957. There was an "unmistakable swell of cheering" when Mrs. Vera Pope of Gloucester accused the refugees of taking jobs and accommodation from "our own" people.⁶² A resolution condemning Russia's actions was passed but the conference refused to accept the final words of the resolution which pledged full support for future measures to alleviate the condition of the Hungarian people.

Hostility towards the Hungarians was further fuelled by the behaviour of the unsettled element amongst the refugees. Both at the time and in subsequent years, the number of 'petty criminals' and 'social misfits' who entered Britain as refugees has been consistently exaggerated. In a PEP broadsheet 'Refugees in Britain' issued on 16 February 1958 it was stated that of the Hungarian adolescents still resident in hostels some had become "so demoralized by their experiences as to present a serious delinquent problem". In his study of immigrants in Bedford, Brown states,

"The small group of Hungarians proved an exception to the general pattern of law-abiding European immigrants. Indeed, their crime rate in Bedford in relation to their numbers has been greater than that of any other immigrant group".⁶³

Brown then described a small group of women responsible for "persistent shop-lifting", and a group of young men responsible for violence, drunkenness, traffic offences and larceny. An official report describing these people as 'a parasitic band of layabouts' was thought to be "an appropriate summing-up" of their behaviour. However, in recent years shoplifting and excessive drinking have come to be recognized as often being an expression of the need for help from psychologically or emotionally disturbed individuals rather than wanton criminality. Brown also failed to describe the nature of the violence of the Hungarians which could possibly have been provoked by the behaviour of others. Exaggerating the levels of criminality amongst refugees and immigrants is not exclusive to the Hungarians, but is a common accusation made by people hostile, for whatever reason, to the presence of immigrant and refugee groups in Britain. A similar complaint frequently directed at refugee groups, including the Hungarians, is that many are in fact economic migrants taking advantage of refugee status. Whilst this often contains an element of truth, these

people often prove to be hardworking citizens and thereby help to produce favourable attitudes amongst the British towards other refugees of the same nationality. It is also sometimes possible for them to provide a stabilising influence on other refugees of the same nationality with whom they come into contact.

The Hungarian community in Britain

Within the existing Hungarian community there was a generally supportive stance taken towards the newcomers. An organization called the Central Committee of Hungarian Exiles in Britain launched its own Hungarian Relief Fund, which by 9 November 1956 had already raised over £5,000 in addition to its collection of clothing and bedding. Money was also collected by the Hungarian Freedom Fighters' Welfare Association; this fund managed to raise £2,000 in total. It was this fund that in April 1958 became the subject of a Scotland Yard investigation after a small group of Hungarian refugees claimed they had not received their share of the money.⁶⁴

However, a small amount of friction did occur between some of the pre-1956 Hungarian exiles and the 1956 refugees following their arrival in Britain. Although as ex-enemy nationals Hungarians had initially been ineligible for volunteer worker schemes immediately after

the Second World War, the continuing labour shortages resulted in the relaxation of restrictions in the recruitment of ex-enemy nationals from the displaced persons' camps in Europe. However, the EVW scheme was tailing off by this time and only 2,110 men and 429 women of Hungarian nationality arrived in Britain as European Volunteer Workers.⁶⁵ In addition, they were joined by 15 dependants. However, it has been estimated that approximately half of the Hungarian EVWs, including all of the women, re-emigrated from Britain.⁶⁶ A number of Hungarians had also settled in Britain during the 1930s. In 1953 the Hungarian population in Britain was estimated at 7,000.⁶⁷ It was calculated that in 1983 there were approximately 45,000 Hungarian nationals in Britain, under half of which can be accounted for by the arrivals of 1956 and 1957.⁶⁸ The bulk of the rest of these Hungarians would have been part of the pre-1956 Hungarian community in Britain. The small amount of friction which occurred was due in part to a feeling of resentment amongst the existing Hungarian community who felt that the 1956 refugees received a great deal more support on their arrival in Britain than they themselves had experienced.⁶⁹ This friction was also a result of the conflict between an existing Hungarian population which had already settled itself well into the British lifestyle and the newcomers who were still afflicted by an overriding sense of uncertainty. The new arrivals

also had to deal with a powerful sense of culture shock as Britain was completely different from the situation they had just left behind in Hungary. The refugees of 1956 were required to re-evaluate everything, not only about their own lives but also about their judgements of other people. The categories into which people were fitted in Hungary and the criteria for being in those categories had suddenly been removed.⁷⁰ The Hungarian arrivals of 1956 and 1957 had to become accustomed to the norms of their newly-adopted society. It has been suggested they had unrealistic expectations of what to expect from the West on account of the propaganda of Voice of America and Radio Free Europe and that as a result disappointment was inevitable; it was this disappointment which caused the disapproval of the existing Hungarian community.⁷¹

These observations should not be taken to mean that there was a strongly identified Hungarian community organized in Britain before or indeed after the arrivals of 1956. It has been suggested that a significant number of the Hungarians in Britain were Jewish. This claim could be supported in the case of Hungarians who arrived in Britain as EVWs because the only Hungarians who qualified as displaced persons, and thereby were eligible for recruitment to the voluntary worker schemes, were Jews. Many of the Hungarians arriving in Britain prior to the

Second World War were also Jewish, having left Hungary as a result of the educational and occupational restrictions on Jews within its boundaries. However, that is not to say that all pre-1956 Hungarians in Britain were Jewish, for example the authoritarian regime of Horthy had also caused the emigration of a number of political liberals from pre-war Hungary and not all those Hungarians entering Britain as EVWs were of Jewish origin. By 1952 it had been necessary for the appointment of a Hungarian Roman Catholic priest in Britain, and there were also an estimated 300 Lutheran Hungarians overseen by one pastor.⁷² Of the first party of 61 Hungarians who arrived in London on 17 November 1956 it was known that the majority were Roman Catholics, in addition to 'a few' Protestants and twelve Jews.⁷³

There is some evidence of a Hungarian community in London, for example the Hungarian restaurant 'The Gay Hussar', was founded by a Hungarian exile even though it is no longer owned by Hungarians, but similar evidence in the rest of Britain is difficult to find. In October 1986, thirty years after the uprising, there were just eight local Hungarian societies in Britain.⁷⁴

Many of the Hungarians who arrived in Britain after the events of 1956 maintained few links with other Hungarians in Britain but a small number did involve themselves with

the World Federation of Hungarian Freedom Fighters. The president of this organization was General Veress de Dalnoki, a resident of Willesden Green, London. In August 1970 The Times carried an article about the international conference of the federation, over which 81 year old Dalnoki was presiding.⁷⁵ These conferences were not held on a regular basis, there having been six since 1956. Delegates from nine countries would meet to discuss future policy. A major concern in 1970 was for the federation to find potential future leaders, as its current members were either middle-aged or elderly. However, when compared to the political activities of other Eastern European groups in Britain the Hungarians were relatively quiet.

In the early 1980s the Hungarian community in Britain was forced to fight to keep the remains of General Lazar Meszaros in Britain after the Hungarian Government had applied for his exhumation and reburial in Hungary. In September 1980 the Hungarian exiles unveiled a memorial at the grave of the General, former defence minister and Commander-in-Chief of the army, who had died in England in 1858 after fleeing Hungary following defeat by Russian and Austrian forces in 1848-9. A request for his exhumation made by the Hungarian Government had recently been refused by the Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, but the matter did not end there. The Hungarian Government

made two further requests for his exhumation, both of which were refused, the second of which occurred in January 1982. The Hungarian Freedom Fighters' Federation in Britain, the Mindszenty Foundation (UK) and the General's last living relative, a great niece living in New York, had all opposed the exhumation of the man who had come to symbolize Hungary's fight for freedom against oppression. However, the campaign to keep the remains of General Meszaros in Britain received little publicity, particularly when compared to the similar campaign by, and on behalf of, the Polish exile community to prevent the return to Poland of General Sikorski's remains during the period of non-democratic Communist rule in that country.

Language difficulties and English language acquisition

An initial problem for the refugees was that of language. Few of the refugees could speak English when they arrived, and for those that could their English was often of a very basic nature. This problem was made worse by an inadequate number of interpreters, and, according to an article in The Lancet, this had an unfavourable psychological influence on the refugees as very often they received inaccurate information which resulted in disappointment and mistrust amongst the refugees.⁷⁶ However, until the refugees had learned sufficient

English to make themselves understood and to be able to understand others, interpreters were a necessity. Interpreters were not only used by the interviewing officers who were the refugees' first contact with the British authorities but it was also necessary for a number of them to be employed by the Ministry of Labour for their dealings with the Hungarians. In April 1957 there were 342 interpreters employed on either a full or part time basis in connection with the Hungarian refugees. Of these, 124 were themselves Hungarian and 188 British subjects.⁷⁷ It is not stated whether any of those listed as British subjects were naturalized citizens of Hungarian origin. It was felt to be important that all of these interpreters were screened for security purposes as they were working with a vulnerable group of people who were in a position where they could easily be threatened if information about them were to finish up in the wrong hands.

Although learning all the nuances of the language would take time and experience, for obvious reasons the refugees were encouraged to learn as much English as they could and as quickly as possible. The Young Men's Christian Association, aided by the local education authorities and the British Broadcasting Corporation which provided textbooks and records, held English lessons at its larger hostels and simple phrase sheets

were also made available to refugees. Wherever possible it was also found useful to place the refugees in employment where there was already a Hungarian speaker working, usually another Hungarian who had settled in Britain some years previously. For example, it was found at one hospital where there were vacancies which could be filled by refugees, that the matron was able to speak Hungarian. The Hungarian language newspaper Skegnessi Magyar Hirlap also planned to gradually introduce articles written in English as its readers learned the language. Another Hungarian language newspaper Heti Hireck published its last issue on 20 December 1957 as it was no longer needed, the campaign for the refugees to learn English having been so successful.

Learning the language was a priority for the refugees. Firstly there was the economic element; it was easier to find work, once a sufficient standard of English had been achieved. An individual's prospects also improved. There were also more general practical reasons for learning the native language, for example it made shopping less difficult. A knowledge of conversational English was also desirable to prevent the psychological effects of isolation; the established Hungarian community in Britain was small in number and the arrivals of 1956 sought integration into British social life at a more increased rate than the Eastern European groups who had

arrived in Britain 1945-50. The Hungarians tend to speak more of assimilation than integration into the British community than the other national groups. Ideas of returning to live in the country of their birth, whether realistic or romantic, were also less common amongst the Hungarian community than earlier East Europeans.

Educational opportunities

One of the most positive responses to the refugees came from students and the educational institutions. Hungarian students were flown to Britain on five special flights so that they did not get lost amongst the bulk of the refugees. The universities offered 150 places to the Hungarians although more were welcome if the Government could supply sufficient funds.⁷⁸ Extra funds were provided for some additional students from grants made in 1957 by the Ford Foundation and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Provision was also made for the financing of 28 doctors, eight dentists and six pharmacists to undertake training for them to requalify and become eligible for employment in their professions in Britain.⁷⁹ Many of the students needed intensive language lessons before starting their courses. However, not all refugees chose to resume their studies on arrival in Britain, many desired to establish themselves in

Britain as quickly as possible and financial independence was only possible for those who found employment.

Pitman's Central College in London provided free scholarships to 25 Hungarian refugees in November 1956. Under the scholarships the Hungarians were to be taught English, shorthand, typing, book-keeping and other commercial subjects. There would be at least six months of training for each student. During their time at the college they were also given free meals and the services of an overseas students' welfare supervisor were available to them with regards to accommodation problems.

At a lower level, Hungarian children were encouraged to start attending local schools as soon as possible, and in September 1958 a story was published in The Times of a 14 year old Hungarian boy who had arrived in Britain two years previously speaking no English and had recently passed four GCEs.⁸⁰

Accommodation provision

On arrival the refugees were originally housed in army barracks which had been placed at the disposal of the British Council for Aid to Refugees by the War Office. The refugees were then moved to hostels situated throughout the country which had been provided by a

number of different organizations, for example, the North Eastern Divisional Coal Board offered accommodation for 60 refugees and 150 were housed at Donnington Hall in Leicestershire which had been cleaned and prepared by university students. By January 1957 there were more than 100 of these hostels.⁸¹ The availability of such hostel accommodation, rather than employment, was the deciding factor in the dispersal of the refugees throughout the country and it was therefore in the interests of employers if they could provide some form of accommodation for any Hungarians they proposed to employ.

However, the ultimate aim was to get the refugees settled in private accommodation. This task was the responsibility of the British Council for Aid to Refugees, which was helped in its investigations as to the suitability of potential accommodation by the Women's Voluntary Service. Despite initial enthusiasm offers of private accommodation were less forthcoming, particularly in industrial areas. However, this was primarily due to a lack of suitable housing rather than discrimination. There was a great deal of racial discrimination in the letting of private accommodation at this time. For example, signs in windows which clearly stated 'No coloureds' were not uncommon but, in general, this had little effect on the Hungarians who benefited from being both white and European.⁸² This was confirmed in tests

undertaken on behalf of the Race Relations Board in which English, Hungarian and West Indian applicants applied for accommodation. It was found that in two-thirds of the cases where English and Hungarian applicants were welcomed, the West Indians were either told there was nothing available or were offered stiffer terms.⁸³

In May 1957 the lack of available private accommodation for the Hungarians resulted in plans to convert large houses in industrial areas into flats for the refugees, and by charging economic rents the scheme would be chiefly self-financed. One area where the scheme was implemented was Croydon where, although there was generally a positive attitude towards the Hungarians themselves, there was some bitterness towards the refugees securing accommodation so easily at a time when local people were suffering themselves from the housing shortage in the area.⁸⁴

In later years there was a move towards home ownership for many Hungarians but few were in a position to buy houses of their own soon after arrival. The British Council for Aid to Refugees was able to help some Hungarian families in their purchase of houses and by the end of 1958 it had made loans, or part-loans, part-grants, to enable 82 Hungarian families to do this.⁸⁵ However, for many refugees mortgages remained difficult

to obtain, even for those who had saved sizeable deposits for a house. Some Hungarians followed the pattern set by earlier groups of East European refugees, buying property as a joint venture with other individuals or families and then living in multiple occupation until able to afford houses of their own.

However, in general, in the initial stages of resettlement lodgings remained difficult to find and on 1 May 1957 there were still 6,000 Hungarians resident in hostels.⁸⁶ Even by the end of August of the same year 2,500 refugees remained in 30 hostels.⁸⁷ By the end of July 1958 there were 735 Hungarians still resident in National Assistance Board hostels.⁸⁸ The Hungarians were made as comfortable as possible during their stay in the hostels and, although there are stories of disillusionment amongst hostel residents, there are also stories of refugees who felt settled there and were reluctant to leave.

The employment of Hungarian refugees in Britain

As far as employment was concerned, there was a certain amount of prestige to be gained by employers sponsoring Hungarian refugees, and by 13 December 1956 over 1,000 employers had notified the Employment Exchanges that they had one or more vacancies for Hungarian refugees.⁸⁹ This

was in contrast to attitudes towards the employment of other ethnic minorities within Britain. For example in 1967 a test was undertaken to discover the degree of discrimination encountered by job applicants. In the test three men, a West Indian, a Hungarian and an Englishman applied for work at a sample of 40 firms who were unaware that the test was taking place. Where a difference in qualifications existed it was weighted in favour of the West Indian.⁹⁰ The results of the test were as follows :

<u>Tester</u>	<u>No vacancy</u>	<u>Positive job offer</u>
West Indian	37	1
Hungarian	23	10
Englishman	10	15

As can be seen from the above figures the Hungarian was told more frequently than the Englishman that no vacancy existed but did receive ten positive job offers. Both the Englishman and the Hungarian fared far better than the West Indian who received only one positive job offer and was told by 37 of the 40 that there were no vacancies. Although some discrimination was encountered by the Hungarian it was nowhere near the level of that directed at the West Indian.

The Ministry of Labour, voluntary bodies, and local authorities worked together to find employment for the refugees, and in addition some Hungarians found work through friends and relatives. In areas where there were more refugees than jobs the Employment Exchange managers made special approaches to employers on their behalf. Some of the Hungarians arriving in Britain in 1956 and 1957 were known to have professional qualifications, for example there were a number of engineers, and everything possible was done to ensure the refugees secured work corresponding to their skills. Those with scientific or technological skills were placed on the Technical and Scientific Register, whilst vacancies in other types of employment available to Hungarian refugees were circulated to other employment exchanges to find someone with the necessary experience or qualifications if the position could not be filled locally. The agencies were aided in their task of finding work for the refugees by the fact that in 1956 and 1957 Britain was in a situation of full employment and also that most of the refugees were young men, many of them skilled. They were described by Minister of Labour, Iain Macleod, as being "comparatively easy to place in employment".⁹¹ By 22 January 1957 nearly half of the refugees registered for work had been found employment⁹² and by mid-September fewer than 200 of the Hungarians remained unemployed.⁹³ However, their limited knowledge of the English language

had meant that some of the refugees had been forced to accept work which was less skilled than that which they had followed in Hungary. Even refugees intending to emigrate elsewhere were found temporary employment if it appeared that they would have a long wait before obtaining their passages.

It was not uncommon for the Hungarian refugees of 1956/7 to find employment in businesses owned by Hungarians already resident in Britain, and also other previous East European arrivals in Britain, for example the Poles.

The gender distribution amongst types of employment were similar to those experienced by the European Volunteer Workers in the previous decade. The majority of male Hungarians were found employment in engineering (both skilled and unskilled), foundries, agriculture, building, textiles, food processing and packing, hospitals (as nurses and porters), and as general labourers in various industries. The most common jobs for Hungarian women were as general factory workers, laundry and domestic workers. The main differences in occupations when compared with those of the EVWs is the lack of Hungarian men able to enter coalmining, but their more ready acceptance into the engineering industry.

Although measures were taken to prevent exploitation by prospective employers, for example, it was stipulated that, like other foreign workers before them, the refugees of 1956 must not be paid at rates undercutting those of British workers, some Hungarians still left their employment complaining of low wages. This was mainly due to the unrealistic expectations of some Hungarians who had heard stories greatly exaggerating the high level of wages in Britain. Others left their early placements because they were psychologically and emotionally still in a state of turmoil, whilst others left their first employment after finding jobs they considered more suitable. In some cases these early departures of Hungarians, for whatever reasons, alienated a number of employers who resolved never again to employ Hungarians. However, most employers were understanding of initial difficulties and in most cases the refugees soon fitted in with their English colleagues. Hungarians leaving jobs of their own accord had to wait six weeks before being entitled to social security benefits but alternative employment was not difficult to find at this time.

To combat concern that Hungarians might take employment from British workers the Ministry of Labour worked closely with the trades union movement which proved to be "very co-operative".⁹⁴ The Trades Union Congress had a

very positive attitude towards the refugees and was involved from the start with the Ministry of Labour in negotiating the employment of the Hungarians. It was agreed that the regional controllers of the Ministry of Labour would inform the secretaries of the regional advisory committees of the Trades Union Congress concerning the employment of refugees in their regions and regarding the industries in which they were being placed. Where it was a condition of employment that the applicant should be a member of the appropriate trade union the Hungarian was asked if he/she wished to join and if so was referred to the union concerned. Unlike the earlier groups of East European refugees who arrived in Britain in the years immediately following the Second World War, the Hungarians were not subject to limitations on the types of employment available to them and no agreements were made that in the event of redundancies Hungarians should be the first to leave because of their nationality but that normal redundancy arrangements of 'last in, first out' should apply.

The individual unions themselves also had a positive attitude towards the Hungarians, for example the National Union of Railwaymen which agreed to the employment of suitable refugees. One exception to this was the Amalgamated Engineering Union, left-wing members of which

in some local branches refused to accept Hungarians into the closed shop working environment on political grounds.

However, the most notable anti-Hungarian stance taken by a trades union was that of the National Union of Mineworkers. The National Coal Board had brought over from Austria 3,600 refugees who had mining experience with the intention of employing them in British pits after they had undergone the relevant training and learned sufficient English.⁹⁵ The NCB was to provide the men with English language and vocational training and accommodation in mining hostels. The chairman of the National Coal Board, James Bowman, and the executive committee of the National Union of Mineworkers assured miners that the Hungarians would be used to supplement rather than displace British workers as possibly 60,000 new men would be needed in the pits in 1957 to compensate for wastage and the refugees would be only a small proportion of these new men.⁹⁶ However, despite active support by the leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers for the employment of Hungarians in the industry, in many areas, particularly South Yorkshire and South Wales, the local miners' lodges simply refused to accept the Hungarians so that by July 1957 only ten per cent of the Hungarians who had undergone National Coal Board training had found jobs as miners, the others

having been forced to seek employment in different industries.⁹⁷

The figures given for Hungarian employment in coalmining in the House of Commons on 30 October 1957 were that in total 4,186 Hungarians had been accepted for training for work in the mines of whom 891 had completed their training with 482 actually employed in coalmining and 249 in ancillary occupations. There were 644 Hungarians still in training centres. The Employment Exchanges were helping those who now wished to seek employment in other industries to find work.⁹⁸ In February 1958 only 821 Hungarians had been able to find employment in coalmining, whilst a further 357 were still training in National Coal Board hostels. The remainder of the original 4,186 had found employment in other industries.⁹⁹

Questions were raised in Parliament several times about this situation and Labour Party representatives were very disappointed by the miners' attitude. Concern was also expressed on a number of occasions that public funds were being wasted on training as miners Hungarians who would never be able to take up employment in the coal industry but reassurances were always given that the cost of the training and maintenance of these men was to be met by the National Coal Board and therefore did not provide a

drain on public funds. The position taken by the British miners towards the Hungarians gained a great deal of publicity both in Britain and on an international level, for example in German journal Der Spiegel.¹⁰⁰

As far as the employment of female refugees was concerned, one popular idea amongst British politicians was that they be offered nursing and domestic work to make up the shortfall of labour in these sectors. Similar employment was also some of the first on offer to the previous East European refugee groups immediately after the Second World War. Unattractive to British workers, these jobs were always the first on offer to foreign workers of any sort.

Another area of employment which was unattractive to British workers was agriculture and there were calls for Hungarians with relevant experience to be made available to British farms. Such employment was on offer mainly to Hungarian men. Again, this is paralleled with the experience of the Poles and European Volunteer Workers during the previous decade. However, unlike these previous groups of East Europeans, the majority of the Hungarian refugees of 1956 were either students or from urban industrial backgrounds and most tended to remain urban-orientated. The National Farmers' Union and a number of individual farmers notified many vacancies for

agricultural work but as very few of those who arrived in Britain were actually suitable for skilled agricultural work many of these posts remained unfilled.

Social attitudes; the effect on assimilation and integration

The arrival of the Hungarian refugees was accompanied by much publicity and popular sympathy but how easy did British responses make it for them to achieve a significant degree of integration or assimilation within the community ? Language difficulties, the strangeness of their new surroundings and life in the camps initially made integration difficult but these were only temporary problems. After the first, positive, response of the British people there was a change in attitude amongst some sections of the community when stories of disorder involving the refugees first began to be published in the newspapers. There were even cases of gangs of British male youths attacking the refugees. However, by 1959 the situation had settled and generally the Hungarians were seen by the public to have adapted to the British way of life and had been accepted by the population. There was also recognition and gratitude from the Hungarians that the responses of the British Government and the British public had on the whole been positive. Many of the refugees are unwilling to criticize their adopted

country. In 1986 the president of the British branch of the Hungarian Freedom Fighters' Association wrote to the British Prime Minister expressing thanks on behalf of the members of the Association for the positive help given to them by the British Government and people after the uprising of 1956.

Naturalization

After five years' residence in Britain the Hungarians were able to apply for naturalization. Many did so in recognition of their expected permanent residence in Britain. Few expected Hungary to be freed from Communist rule and the "bloody Russians".¹⁰¹ Moreover, the small number of Hungarian women in Britain meant that many Hungarian men now had British wives and families and would therefore be unlikely to return to Hungary even in the event of political change. The acquisition of British citizenship also made foreign travel easier, which was particularly desirable for those with family connections still in Hungary. It was not until October 1978 that Hungarian émigrés were allowed by the Hungarian Government to travel to their homeland without first receiving special permission. It was also at that time that a new law was passed in Hungary which approved Western travel for those Hungarian citizens who were

related to political refugees resident abroad. They would previously have been refused passports.

The naturalization procedure was not always explained to the Hungarians as clearly as it could have been. For example, one Hungarian recounted his experience of having been told to telephone a Whitehall number and was so shocked when Scotland Yard answered that he slammed the receiver down. However, on calling back it was explained to him that the police needed to ask him a few questions because he had applied for naturalization. The questions turned out to be the same as those which had been raised in his previous two security screening interviews.¹⁰²

The majority of the Hungarians feel they have adapted well and, although they will always be Hungarian, after living in Britain for a number of years the majority feel that they could not have returned to live in Hungary whilst it was under Communist rule and that now they were "altogether, someone belonging here" [in Britain].¹⁰³