

Program with Respect to Relief  
and Rescue of Refugees; Permanent  
Resettlement

In Other Countries  
(British East Africa)

000421

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES

February 26, 1944

Re: Refugee Camps in British East Africa<sup>1/</sup>

As of November 1942, there were approximately 8,850 refugees in British East Africa. Of this number, 800 were Greek, 108 in miscellaneous categories, and the remainder Polish. In addition, there were approximately 9,000 internees in the East African territories. The following is a list of the internees and refugees in the various territories of British East Africa as of November 1942:

Kenya: 1,000 refugees and 4,800 internees.

Uganda: 1,950 refugees and 1,300 internees.

Tanganyika: 5,300 refugees and 3,000 internees.

Northern Rhodesia: 500 refugees.<sup>2/</sup>

As of June 1943, there were approximately 12,000 Polish and 500 Greek refugees in British East Africa. They were apportioned in the territories as follows:

Uganda: 4,708 Poles

Tanganyika: 4,950 Poles and 500 Greeks

Northern Rhodesia: 1,426 Poles

Southern Rhodesia: 909 Poles<sup>3/</sup>

By November 1943, the number of refugees in British East Africa had increased to 16,000.<sup>4/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> Information taken from files of the American Red Cross in folder entitled "East Africa."

<sup>2/</sup> List dated November 18, 1942, entitled "Refugee and Internment Camps, East African Territories."

<sup>3/</sup> List attached to field report No. 8, dated July 5, 1943, from James Foley to Ralph Bain.

<sup>4/</sup> Letter dated November 30, 1943, from C. E. Bailey, Assistant Director, Middle East Operations, to Van Arsdale Turner, Acting Assistant Director, Insular and Foreign Operations.

*see file in 11*

According to an American Red Cross report dated May 14, 1943, it was anticipated that ultimately there would be approximately 21,000 refugees in East Africa.<sup>5/</sup>

Description of the East African Refugee Administration (EARA)

EARA is the sole official Government agency responsible for the care and repatriation of refugees in East Africa. The American Red Cross recognized EARA as such in an agreement dated November 11, 1942, copy of which is attached to the original of this memorandum. All American Red Cross aid in East Africa has been channeled through EARA in the same manner that it has been channeled through MERRA in the Middle East.

Whereas MERRA is under the Ministry of State, which, in turn, is under the direction of the Foreign Office, EARA is a division of the East African Governors' Conference, which is under the British Colonial Administration. Thus, there is no one official ~~interoffice~~ British agency handling the over-all refugee relief problem which Ralph Bain, the Director of Middle East Operations for the American Red Cross, considers unfortunate. In his report to headquarters Bain stated that this is a problem of British political structure about which apparently nothing can be done.<sup>6/</sup>

EARA assumes responsibility in the British East African territories for the following:

- (1) Reception of refugees in East Africa;
- (2) Transportation of the refugees to the refugee camps;
- (3) Maintenance of records and general handling of all information relating to matters of refugee welfare; and
- (4) Coordination and direction of refugee programs.

The individual territorial governments in which the refugee camps are located are responsible for the provision of quarters, supplies, and medical care to the refugees. The British Government

---

<sup>5/</sup> Interoffice memorandum dated May 14, 1943, from Mr. More to Mr. Mitchell.

<sup>6/</sup> Memorandum of Ralph Bain, dated December 3, 1942, re "Report of Arrangements with the East African Governors' Conference for American Red Cross Cooperation."

has apparently guaranteed to reimburse the expenditures incurred in this respect by the individual territorial governments. Each East African territorial governor has appointed a district commissioner responsible for refugee activities in the particular territory. In addition, there is a British officer in charge who is the responsible officer in each refugee settlement. In the Polish camps, a Polish camp commandant, who is responsible for the general operation of the camp, is the immediate subordinate of the British officer in charge. The British authorities assume responsibility in the refugee camps for general public health, hospitalization, etc., whereas the Polish agencies assume responsibility for matters such as education, cultural and religious activities, industry, agriculture, etc.<sup>7/</sup>

The authorities of the local East African territorial governments, who are colonial administrators of the old school, apparently resent the interference of EARA in the local administration. For this reason, EARA is in fact largely dependent upon the territorial governments, and its function is relegated in large part to that of a clearing for refugee information. Before EARA can take any policy action, it must obtain the consent of the individual territorial governments. It is important to remember that EARA has advisory rather than executive powers.<sup>8/</sup>

Because of the friction between the administration of EARA and the local territorial governments, the administration of refugee matters in East Africa is far from satisfactory. Mr. Bain, the Director of Middle East Operations for the American Red Cross, summarizes the situation thus:

"There seem to be too many people who have to be consulted before action on a subject can be taken, and all of those consulted have too much or too little to say--and do not say it soon enough. I have said it before, but repetition makes it none the less emphatic, the particular territories that make up British East Africa are completely independent and do not intend to give up any of their functions to an 'Extra-Constitutional' body like the governors' conference, of which the East African Refugee Administration is a division. EARA must consult all the territories about everything, and none of the territories have a representative of EARA in residence."<sup>2/</sup>

*My Marks*

---

7/ Ibid.

8/ Field report No. 2, dated December 18, 1942, from James Foley to Ralph Bain.

9/ Field report No. 3, dated January 20, 1943, from J. B. Foley to Ralph Bain.

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE EAST AFRICAN  
REFUGEE ADMINISTRATION AND THE AMERICAN  
RED CROSS

1. A.R.C. recognizes E.A.R.A. as the sole official Government agency responsible for continuing care and repatriation of refugees in East Africa.
2. A.R.C. will endeavor to meet all requests made by E.A.R.A. for services or supplies within the limits of A.R.C. policies and resources.
3. A.R.C. will operate in collaboration with E.A.R.A. and encourage other relief or government agencies, such as Polecross, Greekcross, etc., to also collaborate with E.A.R.A.
4. All A.R.C. supplies are donated without charge and without any anticipation of repayment.
5. E.A.R.A. will arrange for off-loading, transportation, warehousing and final distribution of all A.R.C. supplies without cost to the American Red Cross.
6. A.R.C. has responsibility for supplies until final distribution is made and A.R.C. representatives will have full freedom both to advise on distribution and to observe all handling until such supplies reach the ultimate beneficiaries.
7. A.R.C. representatives may assist in setting up proper warehousing records, delivery orders, receipts, etc., such as are desired by the American Red Cross, Washington, D. C.
8. A.R.C. supplies are to be distributed impartially on the basis of war caused needs regardless of race, color or creed.
9. This agreement may be amended or modified at a later date by written mutual agreement of the E.A.R.A. and A.R.C.

(sgd) RALPH BAIN

*November 11, 1942*

(sgd) H. L. G. Gurney  
Chief Secretary to Governors'  
Conference.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES

February 26, 1944

Re: Refugee Camps in British East Africa<sup>1/</sup>

As of November 1942, there were approximately 8,850 refugees in British East Africa. Of this number, 800 were Greek, 108 in miscellaneous categories, and the remainder Polish. In addition, there were approximately 9,000 internees in the East African territories. The following is a list of the internees and refugees in the various territories of British East Africa: as of November 1942:

Kenya: 1,000 refugees and 4,800 internees.

Uganda: 1,950 refugees and 1,300 internees.

Tanganyika: 5,300 refugees and 3,000 internees.

Northern Rhodesia: 500 refugees.<sup>2/</sup>

As of June 1943, there were approximately 12,000 Polish and 500 Greek refugees in British East Africa. They were apportioned in the territories as follows:

Uganda: 4,708 Poles

Tanganyika: 4,950 Poles and 500 Greeks

Northern Rhodesia: 1,426 Poles

Southern Rhodesia: 909 Poles<sup>3/</sup>

By November 1943, the number of refugees in British East Africa had increased to 16,000.<sup>4/</sup>

- 
- <sup>1/</sup> Information taken from files of the American Red Cross in folder entitled "East Africa."
  - <sup>2/</sup> List dated November 18, 1942, entitled "Refugee and Internment Camps, East African Territories."
  - <sup>3/</sup> List attached to field report No. 8, dated July 5, 1943, from James Foley to Ralph Bain.
  - <sup>4/</sup> Letter dated November 30, 1943, from G. E. Bailey, Assistant Director, Middle East Operations, to Van Arsdale Turner, Acting Assistant Director, Insular and Foreign Operations.

According to an American Red Cross report dated May 14, 1943, it was anticipated that ultimately there would be approximately 21,000 refugees in East Africa.<sup>5/</sup>

Description of the East African Refugee Administration (EARA)

EARA is the sole official Government agency responsible for the care and repatriation of refugees in East Africa. The American Red Cross recognized EARA as such in an agreement dated November 11, 1942, copy of which is attached to the original of this memorandum. All American Red Cross aid in East Africa has been channeled through EARA in the same manner that it has been channeled through MERRA in the Middle East.

Whereas MERRA is under the Ministry of State, which, in turn, is under the direction of the Foreign Office, EARA is a division of the East African Governors' Conference, which is under the British Colonial Administration. Thus, there is no one official under the British Agency handling the ever-all refugee relief problem which Ralph Bain, the Director of Middle East Operations for the American Red Cross, considers unfortunate. In his report to headquarters Bain stated that this is a problem of British political structure about which apparently nothing can be done.<sup>6/</sup>

EARA assumes responsibility in the British East African territories for the following:

- (1) Reception of refugees in East Africa;
- (2) Transportation of the refugees to the refugee camps;
- (3) Maintenance of records and general handling of all information relating to matters of refugee welfare; and
- (4) Coordination and direction of refugee programs.

The individual territorial governments in which the refugee camps are located are responsible for the provision of quarters, supplies, and medical care to the refugees. The British Government

---

<sup>5/</sup> Interoffice memorandum dated May 14, 1943, from Mr. More to Mr. Mitchell.

<sup>6/</sup> Memorandum of Ralph Bain, dated December 3, 1942, re "Report of Arrangements with the East African Governors' Conference for American Red Cross Cooperation."

has apparently guaranteed to reimburse the expenditures incurred in this respect by the individual territorial governments. Each East African territorial governor has appointed a district commissioner responsible for refugee activities in the particular territory. In addition, there is a British officer in charge who is the responsible officer in each refugee settlement. In the Polish camps, a Polish camp commandant, who is responsible for the general operation of the camp, is the immediate subordinate of the British officer in charge. The British authorities assume responsibility in the refugee camps for general public health, hospitalization, etc., whereas the Polish agencies assume responsibility for matters such as education, cultural and religious activities, industry, agriculture, etc.<sup>1/</sup>

The authorities of the local East African territorial governments, who are colonial administrators of the old school, apparently resent the interference of EARA in the local administration. For this reason, EARA is in fact largely dependant upon the territorial governments, and its function is relegated in large part to that of a clearing for refugee information. Before EARA can take any policy action, it must obtain the consent of the individual territorial governments. It is important to remember that EARA has advisory rather than executive powers.<sup>2/</sup>

Because of the friction between the administration of EARA and the local territorial governments, the administration of refugee matters in East Africa is far from satisfactory. Mr. Bain, the Director of Middle East Operations for the American Red Cross, summarizes the situation thus:

"There seem to be too many people who have to be consulted before action on a subject can be taken, and all of these consulted have too much or too little to say—and do not say it soon enough.. I have said it before, but repetition makes it none the less emphatic, the particular territories that make up British East Africa are completely independent and do not intend to give up any of their functions to an 'Extra-Constitutional' body like the governors' conference, of which the East African Refugee Administration is a division. EARA must consult all the territories about everything, and none of the territories have a representative of EARA in residence."<sup>2/</sup>

---

7/ Ibid.

8/ Field report No. 2, dated December 18, 1942, from James Foley to Ralph Bain.

2/ Field report No. 3, dated January 20, 1943, from J. B. Foley to Ralph Bain.

MJM:im 2/26/44  
MM