

Beyond Empire: Interwar Poland and the Colonial Question, 1918-1939

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the ways in which interwar Polish elites addressed a series of real and imagined contemporary problems related to the Colonial Question, which they identified as an irrational division of land and resources around the globe. Emerging from a destructive world conflict, the new Polish state was built on the ruins of three defunct empires, put together from multiple social, economic, legal, and political systems. It dealt with countryside unemployment, lacked the capital necessary for faster industrial development, and managed large national minorities in order to promote the Polish-Catholic character of the nation. Breaking from the traditional historiography, which explores the Polish government's domestic attempts to answer what it constructed as demographic and economic "questions," the dissertation considers state, semi-state, and non-state colonial projects designed and carried out in order to manage emigrant populations and build economic outposts far beyond Poland's borders.

In South America, Polish elites addressed the question of emigration by turning Catholic peasant emigrants into "colonists" imagined as acting as the state's economic and political agents. In Africa, they discerned opportunities to drag Poland into "modernity" through trading posts and plantations. By the second half of the 1930s, Africa also offered "solutions" to other "questions": Poland's relationship to non-Europeans, its place in the Wilsonian international system, and its treatment of national minorities, particularly Jews. The chapters of the dissertation progress chronologically to reflect the changing demographic, political, and economic priorities of Polish colonial policies, whose geographic focus changed accordingly from one country to the next.

In the years 1918–1939, Polish colonial projects resulted from a cooperation between state agencies, companies, and individuals operating within a larger context of the Wilsonian world order. This monograph provides an in-depth analysis of the ways in which state actions stemmed

from compromises between multiple domestic interests and international realities. In addition to illuminating the place of an eastern European state in the Wilsonian world order, however, the dissertation also challenges the traditional interpretations of modern Polish nationalism and anti-Semitism as exclusively right-wing phenomena, showing their external manifestations as occurring across the political spectrum and featuring moments of unexpected inclusivity.

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Preface

The story of Polish colonial aspirations manifested itself to me for the first time under rather accidental circumstances. I was an undergraduate student at New York University flying back from Warsaw to the Big Apple after spending one of the summers in my native Poland. At the Fryderyk Chopin Airport, while searching for last-minute gifts for my friends and family in one of the duty-free shops, I caught sight of a book with an intriguing title. It was a collection of reports that an amateur cyclist hailing from Poznań sent to Polish newspapers during his epic journey around Africa in the 1930s. How did a Polish cyclist find himself in colonial Africa? Hardly in a rush for my flight, I opened the book to a random page and skimmed through a letter about Polish settlers whom the author had encountered in Portuguese Angola. I did not get an answer to my question but was hooked. There was not only a Polish cyclist in Africa but a whole Polish community! Why? I kept reading further and learned about efforts to promote Polish emigration to Angola during the period. After a couple of minutes, I decided to purchase what seemed to be a potential primary source collection. By the time of my senior year, I had taken multiple courses in modern European history but started to develop a certain fatigue for trending research topics like nationalism in the Habsburg Monarchy; I looked forward to reading and writing about more “exotic” subjects.

I discovered soon enough that reading about Polish settlement in Angola was not a one-time intellectual excursion to a tropical island, however, but a cruise across many rivers, seas, and oceans. Aboard this ship, I started to formulate a growing list of questions about a daunting broader topic that was slowly revealing itself to me. What was the relationship between emigration from interwar Poland and the country’s economic expansion? What was the attitude of the Polish state, itself a fledgling product of a sort of anti-imperial nationalism, toward the colonial empires and

toward the new international system that sanctioned their mandate to rule certain overseas territories? What was the function of colonial aspirations in Polish foreign policy? Forms of older questions that my mentors had repeatedly asked me in the past now returned to haunt me with a vengeance. How did Polish economic and political activities in Africa reflect contemporary ideas about modernity and civilization? In what ways did the domestic situation in Poland, including nationalism and anti-Semitism, as well as more legitimate demographic and economic concerns, affect the Polish government's promotion of colonial projects? Why did the nature of Polish colonial aspirations change over time? By the end of 2013, I had decided that I should pursue a Ph.D. to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to tackle these intimidating questions. Moreover, within a couple of years, my topic suddenly appeared relevant to me as Western countries struggling with mass migration from the Middle East and North Africa called for international approaches, if not "solutions," to the "problem." Treating colonial aspirations as a point of entry, this dissertation examines interwar Polish struggles to navigate the international system in order to find "solutions" to what was constructed as a series of contemporary "questions" ranging from migration to industrial development to national identity.

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A Note on the Use of Names, Sources, and Translations

Whenever possible, I have cited historical documents available in printed volumes instead of their corresponding archival call units to facilitate cross-referencing for readers. Likewise, if available, I have cited the English translations of published sources for readers without the knowledge of all the languages present in this dissertation.

I have used the official contemporary names of locations (e.g. Lwów instead of L'viv, Gold Coast instead of Ghana). I have also used abbreviations, acronyms, and metonyms to refer to different institutions referenced in the text: the Brühl Palace, for example, stands for the Polish foreign ministry. Readers can find the full list of these in the next section.

For the sake of uniformity and accessibility to readers, I have followed the modern Polish spelling rules first introduced in 1936. For instance, I have written *kolonia* instead of *kolonja*. As far as I could tell, this has not altered any meaning of the words.

Upon citing interwar period sources, I have preserved the original term *murzyn* (sometimes spelled with an upper-case “m”) to denote dark-skinned people from sub-Saharan Africa instead of using the English translation *Negro*. In Poland, the term *murzyn* can be employed with a racist connotation to suggest a connection between slavish mentality and Africans.¹ Anthropologists point out, however, that the term can still be merely descriptive and that its more neutral etymological origin in *moor* does not come across in *Negro*.²

¹ See Grażyna Zarzycka, “‘Dyskurs prasowy o cudzoziemcach. Na podstawie tekstów o Łódzkiej Wieży Babel i osobach czarnoskórych’: autorskie omówienie monografii,” *Postscriptum Polonistyczne* 1, no. 1 (2008): 246.

² See Antonina Kłoskowska, “Nation, Race and Ethnicity in Poland,” in *“Race,” Ethnicity And Nation: International Perspectives On Social Conflict*, ed. Peter Ratcliffe (Routledge, 2005), 187; Maciej Ząbek and Katarzyna Bartoszyńska, “Africans in Poland: Race Relations in Contemporary Polish Society,” *International Journal of Sociology* 39, no. 3 (2009): 69.

Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Metonyms

BGK = Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego (National Development Bank)

Brühl Palace = Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw

GAL = Gdynia-America Shipping Lines

LMiR = Liga Morska i Rzeczna (Maritime and River League)

LMiK = Liga Morska i Kolonialna (Maritime and Colonial League)

MKE = Międzyministerialna Komisja Emigracyjna (Interministerial Emigration Commission)

MSZ = Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych (Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw)

MTO = Międzynarodowe Towarzystwo Osadnicze (International Company for Settlement)

NZO = New Zionist Organization

OZN = Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego (Camp of National Unity)

PAT = Polska Agencja Telegraficzna (Polish Telegraphic Agency)

PTE = Polskie Towarzystwo Emigracyjne (Polish Emigration Society)

PTK = Polskie Towarzystwo Kolonialne (Polish Colonial Society)

TK = Towarzystwo Kolonizacyjne w Warszawie (Colonization Society in Warsaw)

Quai d'Orsay = Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Paris)

Whitehall = Foreign Office (London)

Wilhelmstrasse = Foreign Ministry (Berlin)

ZPK = Związek Pionierów Kolonialnych (Union of Colonial Pioneers)

Map: Interwar Polish Colonial Projects around the World

Original map from: Hydrographic Office of the U.S. Navy (Public Domain)

Note: The red circle indicates the geographical focus of Polish efforts in South America.



Introduction

Interwar Poland and the Colonial Question

It was April 28, 1934. Janusz Makarczyk, a representative of the Maritime and Colonial League of Poland, was in Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, one of the last remaining independent states in Africa. After a banquet featuring ice cream and other refreshments suitable to the tropical climate, Makarczyk and Liberia's secretary of state signed an agreement whereby Liberia granted Poland a series of economic privileges for little in exchange. By September, a secret annex was also signed, yielding the control of Liberia's finances to a Polish economic expert and anticipating the creation of a Polish battalion in Liberia. In the upcoming months, the resulting Polish mission to Liberia would, as diplomats in Monrovia hoped, inadvertently stop other European powers from annexing what was sometimes called the "Black Republic." In this way, the Polish mission to Liberia affected the geopolitical situation in a region of the world that was distant from Poland, which should itself warrant study. Most importantly, however, it was also an example of attempts to simultaneously construct and address the "Colonial Question" and other "problems" whose "solution" Poles sought in Africa and South America.

Indeed, acts of Polish engagement in imperial spaces around the world should be examined as windows into the Polish perceptions of constructed debates that became known as "questions." Drawing on pan-European forms of discourse that identified phenomena ranging from Western capitalism to the existence of Jewish minorities across the continent as aberrations from imagined norms and utopias, Polish elites likewise considered their manifestations in Poland as "questions" to be "solved." Jerzy Jedlicki has demonstrated that already in the nineteenth century, addressing "questions" was essential for Polish nation-building, with partitioned Poland's stateless elites

tackling the questions of Western capitalism, cosmopolitanism, scientism, and mobility.¹ Likewise, during the interwar period both state, semi-state, and non-state Polish actors imagined that newly independent Poland faced a series of demographic and economic problems, reduced human beings to numbers in technocratic solution schemes, and proceeded to identify engagement with spaces in Africa and South America as a panacea. In the process, as this dissertation demonstrates, Polish elites also contributed to broader discussions about mass migration, international trade, and other aspects of the Wilsonian world order of empires, nation-states, mandates, and colonies.

In the recent years, Holly Case has written an “aggregate history” of interconnected questions that emerged in the modern period, ranging from the Jewish and Hungarian to the social and worker questions. She argues that historians and historical protagonists alike defined questions “in accordance with our own criteria” while “occasionally even offering ‘solutions’ to them.”² She shows that modern-age questions were viewed as problems to be solved rather than interrogatives to be debated, which meant that they turned into mostly manufactured issues. In turn, Case explores the “origins and burial spots” of questions in order to explain their significance in the nineteenth century and beyond.³ In a similar manner, my exploration of Poland’s Colonial Question tackles its intellectual origins and points of intersection with other questions. I examine Polish colonial projects as laboratories in which Polish elites experimented with answers to problems that allegedly plagued their young country, maneuvering the conflicted international system and negotiating between contradictory group and state interests at home. While most scholars have

¹ Jerzy Jedlicki, *A Suburb of Europe: Nineteenth-Century Polish Approaches to Western Civilization* (Central European University Press, 1999), viii–xi.

² Holly Case, *The Age of Questions: Or, a First Attempt at an Aggregate History of the Eastern, Social, Woman, American, Jewish, Polish, Bullion, Tuberculosis, and Many Other Questions over the Nineteenth Century, and Beyond* (Princeton University Press, 2018), xiv.

³ *Ibid.*, xvi.

looked at the ways in which questions concerning national identity or modernity were constructed and addressed in Poland, I advocate for a “colonial turn” that encourages the analysis of their manifestations around the globe from a cultural and intellectual perspective.

Toward a Colonial Turn in the Historiography

Despite their geopolitical significance and prism-like properties, interwar Polish colonial projects have been largely dismissed in the scholarship. Taras Hunczak, for example, has called them a “political anachronism,” since Poland lacked “precondition[s] for great-power status” such as a powerful navy and economic strength. He named the desire to provide hope for a better future to an impoverished population as the only logical explanation for their existence.⁴ Paul N. Hehn has likewise flattened the topic, placing Poland’s “imperialist agenda” in the context of his “low, dishonest decade” of the 1930s, during which “hungry powers” competed for great-power status.⁵ In the same vein, Grażyna Borkowska has argued that Polish statesmen responsible for colonial projects could not distinguish between “ambitious political plans” and “political madness.”⁶

Until recently, the neglectful treatment of colonial aspirations in the historiography of Poland was partly a result of a preoccupation with antiquated national narratives. Fortunately, however, Brian Porter-Szücs and others have called for a “normalization” of Poland’s history to shift it away from the narrative of heroism and martyrdom and to consider the ways in which its trajectory resembled that of other Western nation-states. According to Porter-Szücs, Poland’s “in-between status [between the categories of imperial and colonized nations] makes it a useful portal

⁴ Taras Hunczak, “Polish Colonial Ambitions in the Inter-War Period,” *Slavic Review* 26, no. 4 (1967): 648–56.

⁵ Paul N. Hehn, *A Low Dishonest Decade: The Great Powers, Eastern Europe, and the Economic Origins of World War II, 1930-1941* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 69.

⁶ Grażyna Borkowska-Arciuch, “Polskie doświadczenie kolonialne,” *Teksty Drugie*, no. 4 (2007): 23.

for anyone hoping to view the broad tendencies and characteristics of the modern world.”⁷ Despite thematic commonalities drawn with the rest of the world, however, physical and intellectual interactions with the colonial world are still too rarely studied in the Polish context despite a strong (historical and current) presence of people from Poland living beyond the state’s borders. Whereas the development of maritime nations like Britain and France can only be understood in relation to their colonies, a new body of research suggests the extent to which colonial interactions affected states with elusive maritime records, too.⁸ Still, the Polish field has not enjoyed a true “colonial turn” beyond a couple of studies that examine some Polish individuals, Catholic and Jewish alike, as conduits functioning in the interstices of other/established empires.⁹

There are several reasons why the Polish “colonial turn” remains in its infancy, and why people or institutions associated with Poland are difficult to classify as colonial exploiters, colonial subjects, or other sort of participants in colonialism. In the first place, Poland was never a maritime empire. The so-called “Age of Discovery,” or European overseas conquest, coincided with the “Golden Age” of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the seventeenth century, whose expansion was continental as opposed to maritime. One could possibly credit the Commonwealth

⁷ Brian Porter-Szücs, *Poland in the Modern World: Beyond Martyrdom, A New History of Modern Europe* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 3.

⁸ See, for example, Alison Frank, “The Children of the Desert and the Laws of the Sea: Austria, Great Britain, the Ottoman Empire, and the Mediterranean Slave Trade in the Nineteenth Century,” *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 2 (2012): 410–44; Michael Whitaker Dean, “‘What the Heart Unites, the Sea Shall Not Divide’: Claiming Overseas Czechs for the Nation” (University of California, Berkeley, 2014); S. R. Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2005); Steven Press, *Rogue Empires: Contracts and Conmen in Europe’s Scramble for Africa* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017); Lawrence Sondhaus, *The Naval Policy of Austria-Hungary, 1867-1918: Navalism, Industrial Development, and the Politics of Dualism* (West Lafayette, Ind: Purdue Univ. Press, 1994).

⁹ See, for example, Lenny A. Ureña Valerio, “The Stakes of Empire: Colonial Fantasies, Civilizing Agendas, and Biopolitics in the Prussian-Polish Provinces, 1840-1914” (University of Michigan, 2010); Maria Rhode, “Zivilisierungsmissionen und Wissenschaft. Polen kolonial?,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 39, no. 1 (2013): 5–34; Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering, eds., *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450 to 1800* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001); Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S. Mandel, eds., *Colonialism and the Jews* (Indiana University Press, 2017), 16.

for the colonial adventures of its fief, the German-speaking Duchy of Courland and Semigalia, in present-day Gambia and Trinidad and Tobago.¹⁰ However, the Couronian overseas expansion was more reflective of the Commonwealth's ability to exert systemic imperial power around the globe than it was a manifestation of intentional Polish economic and cultural colonialism. In a similar manner, the recurring suggestions about the colonial character of the Commonwealth's eastward expansion are equally tenuous, since much of it was accomplished through diplomatic channels, as in the case of the Union of Lublin (1569).¹¹

Just as it is difficult to identify the politically weak and predominantly continental Commonwealth as a colonial empire, it is equally tricky to identify partitioned Poland as a colonial subject during the modern period stretching across the nineteenth century, especially if one defines "colonialism" as political occupation and economic exploitation of culturally alien and putatively technologically inferior peoples living overseas.¹² While differences between western European and eastern European developments existed, with the latter being more linguistically and ethnically diverse and more agricultural, the predominantly Roman Catholic and partly industrialized Poland was never completely "culturally alien" or completely "technologically inferior" to the West. It was perhaps for this reason that the term "colonialism" was not traditionally used to describe the rule of the Russian, German, and Habsburg empires over the partitioned Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Nor was the term "imperialism" really applied to the Polish case, perhaps because the difference between "colonialism" and "imperialism" was fleeting. Hannah Arendt, for

¹⁰ See Marek Arpad Kowalski, *Kolonie Rzeczypospolitej: zamorskie zdobycze Polaków, idea i rzeczywistość* (Warsaw: Bellona, 2005), 81–146; Michael Morys-Twarowski, *Polskie Imperium. Wszystkie kraje podbite przez Rzeczpospolitą* (Znak Horyzont, 2016), 255–290.

¹¹ See Hieronim Grala, "Was the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth a Colonial State?," *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, no. 4 (2007): 125–50.

¹² See, for example, Rupert Emerson in David L. Sills, *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 1968, 1–5.

example, defined imperialism as a more concrete and systemic form of colonialism.¹³ Complicating things further, once the term “colonization” emerged as distinct from colonialism, the act of colonial settlement and migration no longer became a conceptually necessary component of colonialism.¹⁴ Moreover, the Marxist concepts of “semicolonies” and “internal colonialism” made their first appearance in the literature, suggesting unequal economic relationships between (somehow Western) capitalists and (somehow Eastern) proletarians.¹⁵

Lastly, Polish economic weakness across the last three centuries has also resulted in the absence of Poland in historical studies preoccupied with the nature of power, including its “soft” dimension.¹⁶ For example, Gallagher and Robinson’s classic model of “imperialism of free trade” posited that modern imperial methods gradually shifted from mercantilism and military intervention to ostensibly non-exploitative commercial expansion.¹⁷ Likewise, followers of the Wisconsin school of William Appleman Williams and David Fieldhouse have interpreted the global hegemony of the United States as a distinct sort of power.¹⁸ Alfred W. McCoy, for example, has argued that U.S. power surpassed conventional structures of empire and developed a distinct form of governance to “extend its hegemony deep into the twenty-first century through a fusion of cyberwar, space warfare, trade pacts, and military alliances.”¹⁹ Moreover, scholars conducting

¹³ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1973), 131–32.

¹⁴ See Jürgen Osterhammel and Jan C. Jansen, *Kolonialismus: Geschichte, Formen, Folgen* (C.H.Beck, 2012), 7–22.

¹⁵ See Norma Beatriz Chaloult and Yves Chaloult, “The Internal Colonialism Concept: Methodological Considerations,” *Social and Economic Studies* 28, no. 4 (1979): 85–99; Ernest Mandel, “Semicolonial Countries and Semi-Industrialized Dependent Countries,” *New Internationalist*, no. 5 (1985): 239–82.

¹⁶ See Joseph S. Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 94–109.

¹⁷ See John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, “The Imperialism of Free Trade,” *The Economic History Review* 6, no. 1 (August 1, 1953): 1–15. Also see Stephen G. Gross, *Export Empire: German Soft Power in Southeastern Europe, 1890–1945* (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

¹⁸ See D. K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1982); William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (W. W. Norton & Company, 1988); Alfred W. McCoy, *In the Shadows of the American Century: The Rise and Decline of US Global Power* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 15–16.

¹⁹ See McCoy, *In the Shadows of the American Century*, 21.

inquiries into different forms of internationalism and human rights discourse flowing from the Vatican, Washington, or the United Nations are interested in the changing nature of power.²⁰ Unfortunately, Poland has been absent from studies concerned with the mutating nature of power, perhaps with the exception of its role in the Soviet Bloc.²¹

It has been this broad field of cultural and intellectual history that has made a Polish “colonial turn” possible, however. The framework in which colonial interactions are interpreted has extended beyond political and economic expressions of power, with terms such as “imperialism” and “colonialism” being defined as intellectual and cultural phenomena and not only in relation to political and socioeconomic domination.²² It has been a popular tendency to understand “empire” as the ways in which states, groups, and individuals manifested their behavior, which has brought about “colonial turns” in the historiographies of other powers present in the region in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. According to recent studies, Moscow’s subjects, for example, constantly negotiated the nature of the Soviet empire, turning it into what historians call an “empire of nations” or a “veiled empire,” among others.²³ In a similar vein, historians of the Wilhelmine period are turning away from the *Sonderweg*-influenced concept of German “marginal imperialism,” which underplays the role that empire played in shaping the

²⁰ See, for example, Giuliana Chamedes, “The Vatican and the Reshaping of the European International Order after World War I,” *The Historical Journal* 56, no. 4 (December 2013): 955–76; Victoria De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance Through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Harvard University Press, 2009); Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia* (Harvard University Press, 2012).

²¹ See Patryk Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland: Culture and the Making of Stalin’s New Empire, 1943-1957* (UNC Press Books, 2015).

²² See, for example, Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (University of California Press, 1997); David Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Nicholas B. Dirks, *Colonialism and Culture* (University of Michigan Press, 1992); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (Routledge, 2013).

²³ See Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge & the Making of the Soviet Union* (Cornell University Press, 2005); Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Cornell University Press, 2004).

modern German society and culture, including the position of women.²⁴ Certain cultural productions of the Habsburg elites, too, are interpreted as intended to position their authors at the top of imagined colonial hierarchies.²⁵

Cultural and intellectual historians have already argued that Poland served as a semi-oriental foil for western Europe. In his classic *Inventing Eastern Europe* (1994), Larry Wolff has examined the ways in which eighteenth-century (mostly French) Enlightenment thinkers constructed “Eastern Europe” as a philosophical concept and treated the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Russian Empire as projection screens for their ideas. In effect, Wolff inaugurated a whole series of investigations into Western fantasies concerning the lands located east of Berlin.²⁶ Historians of the German Empire have likewise shown that Wilhelmine elites employed racial discourse to justify their economic exploitation of Africans and Slavs alike.²⁷ Poland has also been examined more explicitly as an object of Orientalist representation in postcolonial studies concerned with the cultural legacies of colonialism and imperialism.²⁸ The

²⁴ See Arthur J. Knoll and Lewis H. Gann, *Germans in the Tropics: Essays in German Colonial History* (Greenwood Press, 1987); William W. Hagen, “Master Narratives beyond Postmodernity: Germany’s ‘Separate Path’ in Historiographical-Philosophical Light,” *German Studies Review* 30, no. 1 (2007): 1–32; Woodruff D. Smith, “Colonialism and Colonial Empire,” in *Imperial Germany: A Historiographical Companion*, ed. Roger Chickering (Greenwood Press, 1996); Lora Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

²⁵ See Clemens Ruthner, “K.u.k. ‘Kolonialismus’ als Befund, Befindlichkeit und Metapher: Versuch einer weiteren Klärung,” in *Habsburg postcolonial. Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis*, by Johannes Feichtinger, Ursula Prutsch, and Moritz Csáky (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2003), 111–28.

²⁶ See Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford University Press, 2000); Larry Wolff, *Venice and the Slavs: The Discovery of Dalmatia in the Age of Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003); Larry Wolff, *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2010).

²⁷ See Kristin Leigh Kopp, *Germany’s Wild East: Constructing Poland as Colonial Space*, Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012); Robert L. Nelson, ed., *Germans, Poland, and Colonial Expansion to the East: 1850 through the Present*, Studies in European Culture and History (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa. Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 80–95.

²⁸ Founding texts of postcolonial studies include Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Grove Press, 2008); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 2007); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978); Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994). Concerning the wide range of topics

first scholar to undertake the task was Ewa Thompson in *Imperial Knowledge* (2000).²⁹ Many postcolonial scholars followed the approach, although some expressed qualms about placing Poland in the postcolonial framework.³⁰

It is now time for the historiography of Poland to benefit not only from a postcolonial turn but also from a colonial turn that stresses a cultural understanding of empire as much as it explores the Polish position in geopolitical struggles.³¹ So far, however, scholars have merely referenced what they call Polish “colonialism” in their works without adequately addressing what that term means. Tara Zahra, for example, has used the term “East European colonialism” to describe Polish and Czech colonial projects.³² Likewise, in his *longue-durée* study of Polish-African relations, Maciej Żabek has assumed that, if turned into successful policies, Polish aspirations would have resulted in an equivalent of the highly exploitative Portuguese colonialism, since Poland and Portugal could be compared as agrarian nations.³³ One should question such assumptions,

covered by the field, see, for example, Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti, *The Postcolonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons* (Routledge, 2002).

²⁹ See Ewa Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000).

³⁰ See Grażyna Borkowska, “A Post-Colonial Perspective on Polish Soil: Some Questions of a Sceptic,” *Teksty Drugie* 1, no. Special Issue – English Edition (2014): 41–54; Clare Cavanagh, “Postcolonial Poland,” *Common Knowledge* 10, no. 1 (December 5, 2003): 82–92; Marta Grzechnik, “The Missing Second World: On Poland and Postcolonial Studies,” *Interventions*, March 28, 2019, 1–17; Adam F. Kola, *Socjalistyczny postkolonializm: rekonsolidacja pamięci* (Toruń, 2018); Lucy Mayblin, Aneta Piekut, and Gill Valentine, “‘Other’ Posts in ‘Other’ Places: Poland through a Postcolonial Lens?,” *Sociology* 50, no. 1 (February 2016): 60–76; Maria Łukowska and Justyna Stępień, “Postcolonialism and the Polish Colonial Ideology,” in *The Post-Marked World: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*, ed. Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney, Izabella Penier, and Sumit Chakrabarti (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 153–72.

³¹ Andrzej Nowak has already demonstrated intersections between imperial (but not colonial) ideas and geopolitical objectives in the Polish case. See Andrzej Nowak, “Between Imperial Temptation and Anti-Imperial Function in Eastern European Politics: Poland from the Eighteenth to Twenty-First Century,” in *Emerging Meso-Areas in the Former Socialist Countries: Histories Revised or Improvised?*, ed. Kimitaka Matsuzato, Slavic Eurasian Studies, no. 7 (Sapporo: Hokkaido University, 2005), 247–84.

³² Tara Zahra, “Zionism, Emigration, and East European Colonialism,” in *Colonialism and the Jews*, ed. Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S. Mandel (Indiana University Press, 2017), 166–92.

³³ Maciej Żabek, *Biali i Czarni. Postawy Polaków wobec Afryki i Afrykanów*, *Studia Ethnologica* (Warsaw: Instytut Etnologii i Antropologii Kulturowej Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2007), 72.

however, since they have not taken into account the morphing nature of the interwar system or linguistic ambiguities. In the Polish language, in particular, the term “colonies” (*kolonie*) continues to refer not only to political entities but also to any isolated settlements, usually in culturally foreign and/or underpopulated environments.³⁴ Likewise, the term “colonization” (*kolonizacja*) continues to refer not only to an act of conquest but also to the act of settling a previously unexplored place.³⁵ In a reference to colonial projects, Poland’s foreign minister, Józef Beck himself took advantage of this linguistic ambiguity to remark that “Polish colonies start in Rembertów,” now a neighborhood in the east of Warsaw that, because of its young pedigree and distant location in relation to the city center, continues to be referred to as “Rembertów-Kolonia.”³⁶ Interwar Polish colonial interactions can certainly be placed in the theoretical framework of modern colonialism, since they comprised a geopolitical strategy of acquiring colonial resources and living space, but they are better viewed as responses to a series of “questions.”

The Polish and Nationality Questions

The Polish Question emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, upon the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between Prussia (later Germany), Russia, and the Habsburg Empire. Once one of the most powerful states in the world encompassing most of present-day eastern and central Europe, the Commonwealth was an elective monarchy and featured a system in which a multicultural Polish-speaking nobility or gentry (*szlachta*), Lithuanian and Ruthenian magnates included, ruled over peasants of multiple religions and ethnicities with the help of Jewish

³⁴ Witold Doroszewski, ed., “Kolonie,” in *Słownik Języka Polskiego* (Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe), accessed November 12, 2017, <http://sjp.pwn.pl/slowniki/kolonii.html>.

³⁵ Witold Doroszewski, ed., “Kolonizacja,” in *Słownik Języka Polskiego* (Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe), accessed November 12, 2017, <http://sjp.pwn.pl/slowniki/kolonizacja.html>.

³⁶ Józef Beck, *Final Report* (R. Speller, 1957), 132.

economic intermediaries granted a large degree of political autonomy.³⁷ The increasing political weakness and industrial backwardness of this plutocratic Polish state, however, gradually made it an easy prey for the absolute monarchies neighboring it. The fall of the Commonwealth to Protestant Germans and Orthodox Russians encouraged the Polish elites to identify themselves not only with a much less autocratic political tradition of the Commonwealth but also with Roman Catholicism. In effect, over the course of the nineteenth century, the stateless *szlachta* became preoccupied with determining the nature of Polish national identity. This was an important task, given the occasional suppression of the Polish language and/or Roman Catholic religion, in particular in the German and Russian partitions, the central part of the latter known as the Kingdom of Poland.³⁸

By the end of the nineteenth century, two rather opposite concepts of what it meant to be Polish emerged amid the struggles to (re)create a Polish state and expand the membership in the nation beyond the *szlachta*. The first one of these concepts was the more exclusive “Piast” idea of a strictly Polish-Catholic nation without minorities like Jews or Lithuanians, which imagined a compact state encompassing territories corresponding to the domain of the Piasts, the first Polish dynasty. The “Piast” model was the backbone of the socially conservative and economically liberal

³⁷ Concerning the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, see, for example, Daniel Stone, *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386-1795*, History of East Central Europe, IV (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001); Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (University of California Press, 2007); Adam Teller, *Money, Power, and Influence in Eighteenth-Century Lithuania: The Jews on the Radziwill Estates*, 2017.

³⁸ Concerning the (re)construction of Polish national identity under the partitions, see, for example, Serhiy Bilenky, *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe: Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian Political Imaginations* (Stanford University Press, 2012); Patrice M. Dabrowski, *Commemorations and the Shaping of Modern Poland* (Indiana University Press, 2004); Keely Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation in the Village: The Genesis of Peasant National Identity in Austrian Poland, 1848-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Timothy Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier 1863 - 1914* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2008).

right-wing movement called the National Democracy, or Endecja, under the leadership of Roman Dmowski. The Endecja advocated for an economically progressive and socially exclusive program of improving the wellbeing of Polish Catholics and eliminating Jews from Polish economic life, which added a strong anti-Semitic dimension to the earlier “Positivist,” or economically liberal, agenda of “organic work” (*praca organiczna*) aiming to liberate Poland from the partitioning powers through grassroots socioeconomic self-improvement.³⁹

In contrast, the other concept of the Polish nation was called “Jagiellonian,” after the dynasty that ruled Poland-Lithuanian during its greatest territorial extent, and left some room for historic minorities, including Jews. This was the model of national identity supported by the clandestine left-wing and moderately socialist movement under the leadership of Józef Piłsudski, who believed that only in federation with other nations living between the Baltic and Black Seas could Poland be resurrected and remain strong enough to resist Germany and Russia. It was in line with the earlier Romantic idea that Poland was a “Christ of Nations” to be killed “for your freedom and ours.” The implication was that Polish Catholics, as the patrons of independence movements in the Russian Empire, would become the leading members in the future “Intermarium” (*Międzymorze*) federation.⁴⁰

The modern Polish state, declared independent between October and November 1918 and enlarged over the course of the next couple of years, would become the arena where these two

³⁹ Concerning the Endecja, see, for example, Ewa Maj, *Związek Ludowo-Narodowy 1919-1928: studium z dziejów myśli politycznej* (Maria Skłodowska-Curie University Press, 2000); Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (Oxford University Press, 2000); Roman Wapiński, *Narodowa Demokracja 1893-1939* (Ossolineum, 1980).

⁴⁰ Concerning Piłsudski’s “Jagiellonian” project, see, for example, Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, *Intermarium: The Land between the Black and Baltic Seas* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012); Andrzej Garlicki, *Józef Piłsudski 1867-1935* (Otwarte, 2017); Peter Hetherington, *Unvanquished: Joseph Piłsudski, Resurrected Poland, and the Struggle for Eastern Europe*, Second edition (Houston, Texas: Pingora Press, 2012); Jonathan Levy, *The Intermarium: Wilson, Madison, & East Central European Federalism* (Boca Raton, FL: Universal-Publishers, 2007).

visions of national identity clashed with an ever-greater force. Piłsudski and Dmowski considered World War I, which pitted the German and Habsburg partitioning powers against the Russian one, an opportunity not only to create a modern Polish state but to shape it in their image. Operating from Habsburg Galicia, where the Polish elites had enjoyed political autonomy since 1873, Piłsudski, an advocate of the military option of fighting for the Polish cause, decided to cast his lot with the Central Powers, at least initially. He built military units called the Polish Legions to fight the Russians, hoping to attach the Kingdom of Poland to Galicia, if not to carve out a completely independent Polish state upon the ruins of the Russian Empire. In contrast, operating from Paris and London, Dmowski, an advocate of the diplomatic approach, sided with the Entente and, together with the famous pianist Ignacy Paderewski, created the Polish National Committee (*Komitet Narodowy Polski*) in the hope of persuading the Western powers to pressure Russia into forming an independent Poland after beating the Germans and Austrians. The existence of these two rival campaigns ultimately benefited the Polish cause, securing it success in either scenario.⁴¹

In the years 1917–1918, a set of circumstances converged, leading to the solving of the Polish Question as a compromise between the “Piast” and “Jagiellonian” visions. The Central Powers lost the war while Russia became engulfed in a revolution. In consequence, the Germans evacuated the Kingdom of Poland, which they had taken from Russia, while the Austrians yielded all control of Galicia to its Polish elites. In November 1918, Piłsudski was selected as the head of the embryonic state consisting of these two former partitions and as the leader best suited to wage a series of (mostly successful) uprisings and border wars against the Germans, Ukrainians,

⁴¹ Concerning the Polish road to independence, see, for example, Adam Zamoyski, *The Polish Way: A Thousand-Year History of the Poles and Their Culture*, 2. printing (New York: Hippocrene, 1995), 324–40; Jerzy Lukowski and W. H. Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*, Cambridge Concise Histories (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 217–21; Patrice M. Dabrowski, *Poland: The First Thousand Years* (DeKalb, IL: NIU Press, 2014), 371–83.

Lithuanians, Czechs, and, most importantly, Bolsheviks. In 1920, the stunning Polish defeat of Soviet Russia and the subsequent expansion of the Polish state into stretches of eastern territory where Polish Catholics constituted a minority seemed to foreshadow the introduction of Piłsudski's "Jagiellonian" model of Poland. This eastward expansion was not large enough, however, to warrant a multinational federation, while the Polish conquest of the Wilno (Vilnius) region from the Lithuanians and eastern Galicia from the Ukrainians alienated those potential partners against what became the Soviet Union. The other disputed regions incorporated into the Polish state included parts of the littoral of Pomerania on the Baltic, or the so-called "Polish Corridor" carved out of the German partition, and a northeastern part of the industrial Upper Silesia centered around the city of Katowice (Kattowitz). Moreover, in November 1920, the Polish-German port city of Gdańsk (Danzig) was turned into a semi-autonomous "free city" under the protection of the League of Nations.⁴²

The Polish state that emerged out of World War I and the subsequent series of uprisings and wars was home to a population of 27,000,000, only a third of which was Polish-Catholic. According to the 1921 census, 69.2% of the population identified as Polish, 14.3% as Ruthenians or Ukrainians, 7.8% as Jews, 3.9% as Germans and Belarusians, respectively, and 0.2% as "local" people.⁴³ In effect, Poland became home to the second-largest Ukrainian and Jewish populations in the world, but this population diversity produced conflict. Some nationalist "Ukrainians" (*Ukraińcy*) – to use the interwar Polish vocabulary that distinguished "nationally conscious" people from the assimilable "Ruthenians" (*Rusini*) – performed acts of irredentist terrorism to lay

⁴² Concerning the Polish uprisings and border wars in the years 1914-1921, see, for example, Dąbrowski, *Poland: The First Thousand Years*, 383–90; Jochen Böhrer, *Civil War in Central Europe, 1918-1921: The Reconstruction of Poland* (Oxford University Press, 2019).

⁴³ See, for example, Dąbrowski, *Poland: The First Thousand Years*, 390; Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*, 232.

a competing nationalist claim to the eastern borderlands.⁴⁴ Moreover, while most of them remained poor, the strong economic position of some Jews, especially in towns and cities, contributed to the spread of anti-Semitism. In December 1922, a right-wing anti-Semite assassinated the first Polish president, Gabriel Narutowicz, identifying him as a Jewish stooge.⁴⁵ In fact, the holding of a Polish passport, granted to anyone with “regular domicile” within what became Poland after 1908, was not necessarily synonymous with being identified as Polish.⁴⁶ While citizenship generally protected people against unlawful deportation, it was sometimes nationality (*narodowość*), for example Ukrainian or Ruthenian, that was more important, since it determined whether one “belonged” to the greater Polish nation (*naród*) and was incorporated into colonial projects.

Still, in the 1920s the nationality question was only one of the myriad problems plaguing the country built upon the debris of three fallen empires. The German conquest and exploitative occupation of most of partitioned Poland during World War I devastated the country, while the later conflict with the Bolsheviks and other enemies exhausted it further. It initially featured four different political, legal, and economic systems, which resulted in infighting between leaders hailing from different former partitions and in economic problems such as inflation, unemployment, and the lack of direct railway connections between major cities. Poland was located between aggressive and revisionist neighbors like Germany, which wished to destroy it economically under Gustav Stresemann and militarily under Adolf Hitler.⁴⁷ Lastly, Poland’s early political life was highly unstable. Between 1918 and 1926, the year in which Piłsudski carried out

⁴⁴ Concerning Ukrainian nationalism in Poland, see, for example, Grzegorz Rossolinski, *Stepan Bandera: The Life and Afterlife of a Ukrainian Nationalist: Fascism, Genocide, and Cult* (Columbia University Press, 2014).

⁴⁵ See Paul Brykczynski, *Primed for Violence: Murder, Antisemitism, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Poland* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2016).

⁴⁶ Concerning Polish citizenship, see, for example, Richard Blanke, *Orphans of Versailles: The Germans in Western Poland, 1918-1939* (University Press of Kentucky, 1993), 65–66.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*, 237; Zamoyski, *The Polish Way*, 347–250.

a coup d'état and became the country's benevolent dictator, the total of fourteen Polish governments formed and collapsed.⁴⁸

The nationality question was not the only “problem” that preoccupied Polish elites in the interwar period. While the Polish state could be described as a success story in many areas by 1939 – for instance, about 90% of children attended school, a large number of universities had been founded, and a moderate agricultural reform had taken place – it continued to face demographic and economic problems. Rural unemployment was viewed as overpopulation, agricultural holdings were fragmented, especially in the central and southern provinces; there was a dearth of capital necessary for industrial development, and ethnoreligious conflict persisted, including Polish anti-Semitic and anti-Ukrainian discrimination and anti-Polish Ukrainian terrorism.⁴⁹ Because of these persistent queries, many Polish leaders became interested in the Colonial Question, normally the domain of great powers, which they viewed not only in terms of finding Poland a “place in the sun” but also as related to problems that, in their mind, debilitated the country. In effect, these leaders considered “colonial” acquisitions as an external way of addressing internal problems such as unemployment and anti-Semitism. The ways in which they defined “colonies” or “colonial expansion,” however, depended upon a number of other questions.

The Emigration and Jewish Questions

One of these questions was related to internal demographics. At the end of November 1918 Piłsudski justified his plans for expansion in the east by pointing to the overpopulation of the

⁴⁸ Concerning Piłsudski's coup d'état and its causes, see, for example, Antoni Czubiński, *Przewrót majowy 1926 roku* (Młodzieżowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1989); Andrzej Garlicki, *Przewrót majowy* (Czytelnik, 1987); Mariusz Wołos, *O Piłsudskim, Dmowskim i zamachu majowym: dyplomacja sowiecka wobec Polski w okresie kryzysu politycznego 1925-1926* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2013).

⁴⁹ See, for example, Dabrowski, *Poland: The First Thousand Years*, 396; Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*, 249–51.

former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's western half. In consequence, the head of state and future Marshal identified the taking back of the Commonwealth's historic eastern borderlands as "the crucial condition for resurrecting and developing the ruined [Polish] industry and the only place where the jobless masses can be employed, or otherwise they will be doomed to economic emigration."⁵⁰ Piłsudski named the Kielce province as an example of an overpopulated western Polish region where, according to his calculations, the population density was 101/sq. km.⁵¹ His plan of eastern resettlement came true as the Treaty of Riga left large swaths of eastern territory under Polish rule, but so did his fears of continued Polish emigration, which hardly subsided in the 1920s. Unlike Piłsudski, however, other Polish elites identified emigration from Poland not only as a "necessary evil" and a manner in which unemployment could be addressed, but also as a way of advancing Polish interests overseas.

Many Polish leaders practiced what scholars (of Germany and Italy, in particular) have recently described as "emigrant colonialism," or the sending state's use of emigrants as its political and economic agents in receiving states,⁵² an approach that has hitherto been absent in all but the Polish-language literature.⁵³ The idea of channeling emigration from Poland into particular areas in South America was conceived in Galicia as a way of "saving" Polish-speaking and Catholic peasants from assimilation into other cultures. In the interwar period, this idea first developed into

⁵⁰ Józef Piłsudski, "Instrukcja Tymczasowego Naczelnika Państwa w związku z przygotowaniem do wysłania delegacji do państw Ententy," November 27, 1918, 111, doc. 62, PDD 1918.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² See Nancy L. Green, "The Politics of Exit: Reversing the Immigration Paradigm," *The Journal of Modern History* 72, no. 2 (2015): 263–89; Mark I. Choate, *Emigrant Nation. The Making of Italy Abroad* (Harvard University Press, 2008); Sebastian Conrad, *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁵³ See, for example, Anna Kicingier, *Polityka Emigracyjna II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw: Central European Forum for Migration Research, 2005); Edward Kołodziej, *Wychodźstwo zarobkowe z Polski 1918-1939* (Książka i Wiedza, 1982); Jerzy Łazor, "Polityka migracyjna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej – próba syntezy," in *Od kwestii robotniczej do nowoczesnej kwestii socjalnej. Studia z polskiej polityki społecznej XX i XXI wieku*, ed. Paweł Grata, vol. III (Rzeszów, 2015), 44–66; Jerzy Mazurek, *Kraj a emigracja: ruch ludowy wobec wychodźstwa chłopskiego do krajów Ameryki Łacińskiej (do 1939 roku)* (Warsaw: Biblioteka Iberijska, 2006).

the conviction that Polish “colonies” of emigrants would serve independent Poland and that new areas could be pioneered for mass settlement in South America. It was also the intellectual predecessor of colonial projects that aimed to establish more limited and commercial settlements in Africa.

By the mid-1930s, furthermore, the question of emigration became entangled with the national question and the so-called “Jewish Question,” as Polish elites excluded most Jews from the national project and called for their emigration. These calls did not only stem from racial or religious anti-Semitism, but also from the more technocratic but nevertheless highly contentious belief that Poland suffered from a demographic-economic problem of rural unemployment and industrial backwardness. Polish leaders across the political spectrum claimed that, for historical reasons, Jews dominated liberal professions in towns and cities and thus inhibited the socioeconomic advancement of the Polish-Catholic middle class. To gain legitimacy in international circles, they cited contemporary Polish-Jewish scholars like Aryeh Tartakower, who seemed to share their fatalistic conviction that Jewish emigration was good for all parties involved and that what they identified as the Jewish Question could not be solved within the Polish state’s borders.⁵⁴ Furthermore, as they attempted to answer several questions at once, Polish elites sometimes associated Jewish emigration with colonial expansion, viewing Jewish merchants as Poland’s potential agents abroad. In this manner, anti-Jewish sentiments could co-exist with support for Zionism and Jewish expansion in Africa, as all of these ways of thinking imagined Jews leaving Poland.

⁵⁴ See Kenneth B. Moss, “Thinking with Restriction: Immigration Restriction and Polish Jewish Accounts of the Post-Liberal State, Empire, Race, and Political Reason 1926–39,” *East European Jewish Affairs* 44, no. 2–3 (2014): 205–24.

The interwar Polish calls for Jewish emigration – which was strongly encouraged, if coming short of being forced – should not be seen simply as signs of growing racial anti-Semitism of the extreme Right. Jonathen Judaken, for example, has deconstructed the more generic “Judeophobia” into multiple strands, an important task given the historiographical and present-day debates about the essence of “anti-Zionism” and the role of Jews in struggles for racial equality.⁵⁵ Likewise, Polish Judeophobia, to use his term, should be nuanced as consisting of multiple types, too. Instead of privileging the analysis of the Endecja’s ugly discourse, this dissertation excavates the ways in which the colonial policies of the left-leaning Sanacja, clothed in technocratic language, excluded Jews from the national and imperial projects while also pointing out that such exclusion could sometimes produce unexpected opportunities.⁵⁶ I argue that it was the interactions between “strange bedfellows” such as Zionists and anti-Semites, to use Scott Ury’s words,⁵⁷ or the emergence of a “strange consensus” concerning Jewish emigration, to quote Tara Zahra,⁵⁸ that ultimately defined the nature of some Polish colonial projects in the interwar period.

The Western Civilization and Modernity Questions

In addition to the emigration and Jewish questions, the Polish colonial ambitions also rested upon the question of Western civilization.⁵⁹ The interwar Polish elites under examination generally subscribed to the colonial display of Western civilization called the “civilizing mission,” whereby European settlers and Christian missionaries supplied, or at least claimed to supply, non-whites in

⁵⁵ See Jonathan Judaken, “Introduction,” *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 4 (October 1, 2018): 1122–38.

⁵⁶ In a similar way, Kathryn Ciancia has argued that in interwar Poland’s eastern borderlands, “groups (...) shunned in some contexts were temporarily embraced (...) in others.” Kathryn Ciancia, “Borderland Modernity: Poles, Jews, and Urban Spaces in Interwar Eastern Poland,” *The Journal of Modern History* 89 (September 2017): 554.

⁵⁷ See Scott Ury, “Strange Bedfellows? Anti-Semitism, Zionism, and the Fate of ‘the Jews,’” *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 4 (October 1, 2018): 1151–71.

⁵⁸ See Tara Zahra, *The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2016), 150.

⁵⁹ Discussing the nature of Western civilization would extend beyond the scope of this introduction. Instead, see, for example, Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012); Robert A. Williams, *Savage Anxieties: The Invention of Western Civilization* (Macmillan, 2012).

their colonies with modern clothing, tools, medicine, agriculture, and religion in order to secure their political, economic, and spiritual domination.⁶⁰ In the interwar period, the idea of a “civilizing mission” was most appealing to Polish Catholic missionaries, whose desire to convert Africans stemmed from their anti-communist animus and belief that Poland was a rampart of (Catholic) Christianity (*antemurale Christianitatis*).⁶¹ Likewise, as they established limited settlements in West Africa to stimulate trade with the region, Polish planters and merchants marketed themselves as Westerners capable of carrying out “civilizing missions” to gain the trust and respect of their Portuguese and French senior partners. At the same time, in contrast to the missionaries interested in converting Africa in the hope of heavenly compensation, most Polish elites responsible for colonial projects concerned themselves less with Africa and more with Poland’s modernity.

Since the nineteenth century, Polish elites defined modernity as a feature of Western civilization and associated it with high standards of technology, infrastructure, education, and hygiene.⁶² In turn, they viewed the lands of the partitioned Commonwealth as below those Western standards and therefore “backward.” Indeed, eastern Europe developed differently from western

⁶⁰ Concerning “civilizing missions,” see, for example, Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997); Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, *The “Civilising Mission” of Portuguese Colonialism, 1870-1930* (Springer, 2015). Concerning Christian missions in Africa, see, for example, Elizabeth Ann Foster, *Faith in Empire Religion, Politics, and Colonial Rule in French Senegal, 1880-1940* (Stanford University Press, 2013); Norman Etherington, *Missions and Empire* (OUP Oxford, 2005); Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Intervarsity Press, 1990); James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Barbra Mann Wall, *Into Africa: A Transnational History of Catholic Medical Missions and Social Change* (Rutgers University Press, 2015).

⁶¹ Concerning the notion of *antemurale Christianitatis*, see, for example, Liliya Berezhnaya and Heidi Hein-Kircher, *Rampart Nations: Bulwark Myths of East European Multiconfessional Societies in the Age of Nationalism* (Berghahn Books, 2019); Janusz Tazbir, *Rzeczpospolita szlachecka wobec wielkich odkryć* (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1973); Janusz Tazbir, *Polska przedmurzem Europy* (Warsaw: Twój Styl, 2004).

⁶² See Jan C. Behrends and Martin Kohlrausch, eds., *Races to Modernity: Metropolitan Aspirations in Eastern Europe, 1890-1940* (Central European University Press, 2014); Bruce R. Berglund and Brian A. Porter, *Christianity and Modernity in Eastern Europe* (Central European University Press, 2010); Nathaniel D. Wood, *Becoming Metropolitan: Urban Selfhood and the Making of Modern Cracow* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

Europe. Witold Kula has identified the persistence of pre-modern “feudal privileges” and “economic asynchronisms” in the Russian partition of Poland, where industries like Żyrardów’s textile factories incorporated outdated artisanal production. According to him, the Kingdom of Poland could not experience a bourgeois revolution because its feudalistic landlords cooperated with the small middle class to exploit peasants. In consequence, given the shortage of domestic capital, the country’s industrial development required the importation of Western capital and technology, causing economic unsustainability and dependence.⁶³ Kula argued in this manner that Poland’s “backwardness” (*zacoŋanie*) was not a fully “natural” phenomenon but resulted partly from Western “imperialist” capital controlling the most technologically advanced production in one of its socioeconomic “colonies” of Eastern Europe.⁶⁴

The perception of Poland’s “backwardness” became an obsession for the followers of the Positivist “organic work,” a program of grassroots socioeconomic uplifting of the impoverished masses. In order to fight Polish “backwardness,” the “liberal” proponents of “organic work” like Maria Konopnicka and Eliza Orzeszkowa wished to alleviate the discontents of capitalism and to advance the health of Poland’s entire national “organism” through the promotion of individual freedom, secular extrapolation of Christian morals, and assimilation of the Jews.⁶⁵ Furthermore, according to Jedlicki, they believed that “middle-class mobility meant a striving towards a measured growth without large population migrations and without a sharp class polarization” and campaigned for agricultural reforms, low-interest loans, elementary education, rudimentary

⁶³ Witold Kula, *Historia, zacoŋanie, rozwój* (Czytelnik, 1983), 64–76. Concerning “asynchronous” modernity, see, for example, Agata Zysiak et al., *From Cotton and Smoke: Łódź – Industrial City and Discourses of Asynchronous Modernity, 1897–1994* (Jagiellonian University Press, 2019), 1897–1994.

⁶⁴ Kula, *Historia, zacoŋanie, rozwój*, 44–47.

⁶⁵ See Maciej Janowski, *Polish Liberal Thought up to 1918*, trans. Danuta Przekop (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 147–84; Jedlicki, *A Suburb of Europe*, 281–87.

hygiene, and accessible medicine.⁶⁶ This reformed Polish “liberalism,” which remained skeptical of “soulless laissez-faire-ism,” remained influential in the Polish lands into the twentieth century.⁶⁷

The questions of Western civilization and modernity inspired Polish liberals to undertake colonial projects during the nineteenth century, with colonial expansion imagined as a way of dragging Poland into the modern age.⁶⁸ The most well-known of contemporary Polish missions to



Figure 1. Stefan Szolc-Rogozński. Source: NAC 1-N-477-1.

Africa was the expedition of Stefan Szolc-Rogozński (1861–1896) (Figure 1) to present-day Cameroon in the 1880s, which was sponsored by two leading Polish national writers and liberals, Bolesław Prus (1847–1912) and Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846–1916).⁶⁹ In 1882, Szolc-Rogozński, a lieutenant in the Russian navy, built a settlement in that part of Africa to “call entire [African] nations under the banner of civilization.”⁷⁰ In 1936, his only surviving companion, Leopold Janikowski,

claimed that Szolc-Rogozński, wishing to establish the “first sovereign Polish colony” in Africa,” learned the most popular dialect spoken in Cameroon, endeared himself to tribal leaders, and mapped previously uncharted terrains until the Germans took over the territory amid the Berlin Conference.⁷¹ His ill-fated mission was not simply a

⁶⁶ Jedlicki, *A Suburb of Europe*, 282.

⁶⁷ See Janowski, *Polish Liberal Thought up to 1918*, 221.

⁶⁸ For broad investigations into the nature of European modernity, see Robin W. Winks and Joan Neuberger, *Europe and the Making of Modernity, 1815–1914* (Oxford University Press, 2005); Bo Stråth and Peter Wagner, *European Modernity: A Global Approach* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

⁶⁹ See Tadeusz Dzierżykray-Rogalski, “Anniversaire de l’expédition au Cameroun de Stefan Szolc-Rogozński,” *Africana Bulletin* 18 (1973): 216.

⁷⁰ See *Wyprawa S. S. Rogozińskiego : żegluga wzdłuż brzegów zachodniej Afryki na lugrze “Łucya-Małgorzata” 1882–1883* (Warsaw: A. Gruszecki, 1886), ii.

⁷¹ See Leopold Janikowski, *W dżunglach Afryki. Wspomnienia z polskiej wyprawy afrykańskiej w latach 1882–1890* (Warsaw: Liga Morska i Kolonialna, 1936), 7, 134–43; *Wyprawa S. S. Rogozińskiego*.

replication of prior Romantic attempts to create a “New Poland” overseas, however. Instead, a colonial possession, while impossible for Polish elites to maintain without a state, was considered a step in earning Poland a Western status and moving it out of the socioeconomic periphery.⁷² Szolc-Rogoziński himself claimed that Polish society would condemn itself to “backwardness” or “stasis” (*zastój*) if it failed to participate in maritime exploration.⁷³ In 1908, Bolesław Prus imagined a “New Poland” in the Sahara as a space where Polish Catholics acquired strength and modern skills, rather than as a refuge.⁷⁴

After the establishment of the Polish state, many elites believed that domestic economic modernity could be achieved by building maritime infrastructure that would link Poland



Figure 2. Poster advertising two signature Polish trans-Atlantic liners considered feats of Polish modernity. Source: National Digital Library Polona.

commercially with the wider world. In the early 1920s, as the German-dominated Free City of Gdańsk (Danzig) put obstacles in the way of Polish maritime trade, it was decided that a new, completely independent Polish port would be constructed in the place of a small fishing village called Gdynia.⁷⁵ In 1923, the first ships cast anchor at Poland’s first fully sovereign maritime facility.⁷⁶ By 1930, a railroad was built from Upper Silesia to the new seaport and a state subsidiary “Żegluga Polska” formed to facilitate coal exports.⁷⁷ Thanks to the creation of the port,

⁷² See Rhode, “Zivilisierungsmissionen und Wissenschaft. Polen kolonial?,” 29–34.

⁷³ See *Wyprawa S. S. Rogozińskiego*, ii.

⁷⁴ See Bartłomiej Szleszyński, “Kolonialne fantazje i kolonialne koszmary w ‘Zemście’ Bolesława Prusa,” *Wiek XIX : rocznik Towarzystwa Literackiego imienia Adama Mickiewicza* 7 (2014): 207–28.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Józef Borowik, ed., *Gdynia. Poland’s Gateway to the Sea* (Toruń: Baltic Institute, 1934), 5–13.

⁷⁶ See Maciej Rdesiński, ed., *Brama na świat. Gdynia 1918-1939* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1976), 7.

⁷⁷ See Wanda Czerwińska in Roman Wapiński, ed., *Dzieje Gdyni* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1980), 43.

which became fully operational in 1933, and to the expansion of the fleet, Gdynia quickly overtook Gdańsk as Poland's leading port. By 1938, nearly fourth-fifths of Poland's tonnage of goods went by sea.⁷⁸ Gdynia gradually grew into a symbol of Poland's maritime modernity. (Figure 2) While many Polish artists conveyed a mythological connection between the Polish nation and the Baltic Sea through contemporary cultural productions,⁷⁹ other elites stressed a more economic connection, for example by encouraging the youth to participate in sailing camps. According to them, Gdynia constituted an axis "around which the existence, the structure, and the future of Poland and millions of human beings turned."⁸⁰

I argue that, circa 1928, some Polish elites started to imagine colonial expansion in Africa as a natural consequence of maritime modernity. The majority of these colonial pundits consisted of former believers in channeling mass emigration to South America. By 1928, however, their attention shifted to colonial pioneering, or limited settlement for commercial purposes, in Africa. In turn, the focus of this dissertation is Africa because most of the Polish projects described as "colonial" occurred in Africa, where they mostly remained concerned with colonial pioneering as a way of dragging Poland into modernity – despite a passing return to a preoccupation with demographics and emigration in the late 1930s. Furthermore, Polish colonial projects also constituted a set of attempts to define the entire nation, including women, in relation to modernity, as colonial discourse became disseminated in ways viewed as appealing to the female reader whom the state began to consider as important.⁸¹ Indeed, the participation of Polish women in colonial

⁷⁸ See Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*, 239.

⁷⁹ See Adolf Nowaczyński, "Odkrycie Gdyni," in *Brama na świat. Gdynia 1918-1939*, ed. Maciej Rdesiński (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1976), 19–32; Stefan Żeromski, *Wiatr od morza* (Warsaw: J. Morkowicz, 1928).

⁸⁰ Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, *L'orientation baltique de la Pologne: conference faite à l'Université de Varsovie le 1-er février 1933* (Warsaw: Liga Morska i Kolonialna, 1933), 13.

⁸¹ Magdalena Bagińska, "Polki i kolonie w Afryce w świetle prasy kobiecej okresu międzywojennego," *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Historica* 100 (2018): 97–115.

affairs to advance their status in domestic society resembled similar contemporary processes taking place in German and Italian settings.⁸²

In short, projects to transform Poland into a “modern” nation, which preceded the establishment of a Polish state in 1918, blurred the line between its domestic and external interests. It was the liberal side of interwar Poland’s political spectrum that supported colonial expansion, most notably in Africa, as the country’s road to modernity. In effect, the perception of the newly created Polish state as a disadvantaged post-imperial country echoed the older liberal desire to transform its economy from pre-modern and peripheral to modern and metropolitan. Opposed to Western monopolies and wishing to enjoy free trade with Africa, Polish colonial pundits campaigned for the elimination of Western trade intermediaries that hollowed out Poland’s profits and made it economically and politically dependent. Ironically, Polish elites viewed Africa and South America as Poland’s gateways to modernity at the same time as they considered the two continents as “pre-modern” in their cultural practices and industrial backwardness. In turn, the Polish preference for the “pre-modern” in global peripheries suggests that a peculiar type of modernity was desired in the Polish “colonies,” which was not unlike what Kathryn Ciancia has called the “borderland modernity” that Piłsudski’s liberal followers introduced in interwar Poland’s eastern borderlands.⁸³

The Promethean Question

Polish elites, while believing that they had a role as white Europeans to carry out “civilizing missions” and to usher their own nation into modernity in the process, also highlighted that (unlike

⁸² See, for example, Robin Pickering-lazzi, “Mass-Mediated Fantasies of Feminine Conquest, 1930-1940,” in *A Place in the Sun. Africa in Italian Colonial Culture from Post-Unification to the Present*, by Patrizia Palumbo (University of California Press, 2003), 197–224; Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884-1945*.

⁸³ See Ciancia, “Borderland Modernity.”

other white Europeans) they understood the cause of people living under colonial rule. This was a belief connected to the concept of Prometheism. Piłsudski's agents in the east called themselves "Prometheans," which referred to the myth of Prometheus gifting the element of fire to humans, and worked to create a coalition of European nationalities that would help them make the Soviet empire implode along national lines.⁸⁴ I argue that Polish elites responsible for colonial projects considered similar schemes in Africa. This came about not only because many of them also supported Promethean projects in eastern Europe, but also as a result of Liberian and Ethiopian appeals to the old Romantic imagination of the Polish nineteenth-century independence struggles as fights for "freedom yours and ours." In response to these appeals, Polish elites constructed what I call "Promethean colonialism" in Africa, whereby, during a brief period of time, they supported selected tribal and national aspirations to advance their own interests. In order to imbue their schemes with credibility, they subscribed to the view that, since it had itself suffered under imperial domination in Europe, Poland could not pursue "rapacious" (*zaborczy*) policies and that its expansion would be peaceful.

The extent of Polish suffering under empire should be qualified, of course. In the first place, one should refrain from treating "Poland" as a unitary actor that can suffer and instead examine different experiences of different people associated with the term.⁸⁵ Not all inhabitants of Poland were necessarily victims of empire in every sense, and the idea of Polish captivity was itself constructed. In the first place, the peasant majority of the projected Polish nation resisted shedding local identities as one regime gave way to another, and as official serfdom turned into unofficial

⁸⁴ Concerning Prometheism, see Timothy Snyder, *Sketches from a Secret War: A Polish Artist's Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine* (Yale University Press, 2007); Marek Kornat, ed., *Ruch prometejski i walka o przebudowę Europy Wschodniej (1918-1940) studia i szkice* (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 2012).

⁸⁵ For a most recent discussion of the problem of collective suffering in the Polish lands, see Katarzyna Zechenter and Eugenia Prokop-Janiec, "Introduction: The Many Faces of Suffering on Polish Lands," *The Polish Review* 64, no. 2 (2019): 3–6. Also see subsequent articles in the issue.

servitude.⁸⁶ Moreover, the degree of persecution against the Polish language and culture differed from one partition to another. The Germans implemented the harshest measures against Polish speakers toward the end of the nineteenth century, aiming to forcefully assimilate them (and discourage their Catholicism) and to economically expropriate them through the *Kulturkampf*.⁸⁷ In contrast, however, in Habsburg Galicia aristocratic Polish elites enjoyed a far-reaching autonomy within the Dual Monarchy.⁸⁸ Lastly, in Russia, Tsar Aleksandr II banned the use of the Polish language in the educational system only after the uprising of 1863.⁸⁹

Still, it was historical precedents that allowed a legend to emerge that Poland was a nation that understood the cause of colonial peoples. In the years 1802–1803 Napoleon sent two



Figure 3. January Suchodolski, "The Battle for Palm Tree Hill" (1845). This painting depicts a battle that took place in Sainte-Domingue between Polish legionnaires and Haitian rebels. Source: Public Domain.

demibrigades of the allied Polish Legions to help in reconquering the former French colony of Sainte-Domingue in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution. (Figure 3) It is debatable whether, as it has often been claimed, some of the Polish troops deserted to the other side, but Haitians nonetheless developed an appreciation of their Polish enemies for their more humane conduct and

⁸⁶ Concerning the national indifference of many Polish-speaking peasants, see Stauter-Halsted, *The Nation in the Village*.

⁸⁷ Concerning the *Kulturkampf*, see Richard Blanke, "The Polish Role in the Origin of the *Kulturkampf* in Prussia," *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes* 25, no. 2 (1983): 253–62; Lech Trzeciakowski, *The Kulturkampf in Prussian Poland* (East European Monographs, 1990).

⁸⁸ Concerning the Galician autonomy, see Alison Fleig Frank, *Oil Empire: Visions of Prosperity in Austrian Galicia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Daniel L. Unowsky, *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism: Imperial Celebrations in Habsburg Austria, 1848-1916*, Central European Studies (Purdue University Press, 2005).

⁸⁹ Concerning tsarist policies toward the Polish question, see Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia*.

general unwillingness to fight for the French.⁹⁰ Another similar historical precedent was the participation of Maurycy Beniowski (1741-1786), a self-identified Polish-Hungarian aristocrat, in the French conquest of Madagascar. In the interwar period, thanks to his brief election as king of the island, Beniowski's episode in Madagascar was interpreted as a utopian attempt to establish a "New Poland" where the indigenous Malagasy and Polish expats would live in harmony.⁹¹ Likewise, the Polish travelers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in addition to



Figure 4. Eugeniusz Bodo and Anne Chevalier (Reri) in a still from Michał Waszyński's *Black Pearl* (1934), a film set in the tropics. Source: NAC 1-K-12256-1.

sentiments of white superiority, made occasional associations between the fate of Poland and Africa.⁹²

The Polish attitudes toward Africans remained complex in the interwar period, ranging from sympathetic to derogatory, as the public embraced the "exotic" African-

American culture, read about colonial conflicts in newspapers, and watched popular films set in

⁹⁰ See Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 75; Jan Pachonński and Reuel K. Wilson, *Poland's Caribbean Tragedy: A Study of Polish Legions in the Haitian War of Independence, 1802-1803* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). To this day, light-skinned descendants of the Polish legionnaires whom Jean-Jacques Dessalines allowed to stay in Haiti occupy the settlement of Casales, located in the mountains between the towns of Port-au-Prince and St. Marc, where they practice ostensibly "Polish" customs, for example European-looking dances. See Faustin Wirkus, *The White King of La Gonave* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1931), 114–26.

⁹¹ See Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, *Maurycy August Hr. Beniowski: Zdobywca Madagaskaru* (Lwów: Książnica Atlas, 1938); Arkady Fiedler, *Madagaskar: Gorąca wieś Ambinanitelo*, ed. Wojciech Cejrowski (Pelplin: Bernardinum, 2006). Concerning Beniowski's alleged exploits, see, for example, Andrew Drummond, *The Intriguing Life and Ignominious Death of Maurice Benyovszky* (Routledge, 2017); Edward Kajdański, *Tajemnica Beniowskiego: odkrycia, intrygi, fałszerstwa* (Warsaw: Volumen, 1994); Kowalski, *Kolonie Rzeczypospolitej*, 159–202.

⁹² See Dorota Kielak, "Europejczyk w Afryce: 'W pustyni i w puszczy' Henryka Sienkiewicza," in *Sienkiewicz dzisiaj: eseje o twórczości autora "Trylogii"*, ed. Anna Lonkwa (Warsaw: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2016), 245–55; Anna Klobucka, "Desert and Wilderness Revisited: Sienkiewicz's Africa in the Polish National Imagination," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 45, no. 2 (2001): 243–59; Rhode, "Zivilisierungsmissionen und Wissenschaft. Polen kolonial?"; Lenny A. Ureña Valerio, *Colonial Fantasies, Imperial Realities: Race Science and the Making of Polishness on the Fringes of the German Empire, 1840–1920* (Ohio University Press, 2019).

the tropics.⁹³ (Figure 4) Furthermore, Poland was home to people of African descent whose life stories fitted the legend of Polish-African solidarity, as they decided to fight for Poland in moments of need.⁹⁴ Polish elites, including the anti-Semitic Endecja, enjoyed giving publicity to such stories.⁹⁵ Interwar expressions of solidarity between Poland and Africa, however, whether genuine or instrumental, should be foremost attributed to the contradictions of the international system that encouraged Liberians and Ethiopians to appeal to Warsaw for help against Western colonialism.

The Internationalist and Colonial Questions

The nature of the international system was the question that ultimately encouraged Polish elites to consider colonial expansion, particularly in Africa. Polish elites viewed Poland as both a beneficiary of Wilsonian internationalism, since it emerged as an independent state, and a loser, since it was treated as a secondary power. In January 1918 the demand for the restoration of an independent Poland with access to the Baltic Sea was included in Wilson's "Fourteen Points."⁹⁶ In many ways, however, the Conference of Ambassadors and the League of Nations based in Geneva treated Poland and other newly created states in the region as second-category states. Poland was, for example, forced to sign a Minority Treaty while Germany was spared one despite its own significant minority populations. Likewise, the arbitration of the League of Nations over disputed

⁹³ See Mamadou Diouf, Paweł Średziński, and Stępniewska-Holzer, eds., *Afryka w Warszawie: dzieje afrykańskiej diaspory nad Wisłą* (Warsaw: Fundacja "Afryka Inaczej," 2010); Natasza Korczarowska-Różycka, "'Nie ma Polski bez Sahary!': 'kolonialne' filmy Michała Waszyńskiego," *Kwartalnik Filmowy* 37, no. 92 (2015): 22–42; Anna Styczyńska, *Liga Morska i Kolonialna a rozbudzanie zainteresowań etnografią pozaeuropejską społeczeństwa polskiego* (Łódź: Instytut Archeologii i Etnologii Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1998).

⁹⁴ See Zbigniew Osiński, "Powstaniec z Nigerii," in *Afryka w Warszawie: dzieje afrykańskiej diaspory nad Wisłą*, ed. Mamadou Diouf, Paweł Średziński, and Stępniewska-Holzer (Warsaw: Fundacja "Afryka Inaczej," 2010), 97–99; Aleksander Przybylski, "'Żelazny człowiek, dandys i diabeł rogaty.' Sam Sandi pokochał Polskę i Polkę," *Magazyn TVN24*, May 2018.

⁹⁵ See, for example, "Czarny Thomson," *ABC—Nowiny Codzienne*, February 9, 1927, 4.

⁹⁶ See Mieczysław Biskupski, "The Wilsonian View of Poland: Idealism and Geopolitical Traditionalism," in *Wilsonian East Central Europe: Current Perspectives*, ed. John S. Micgiel (New York: The Piłsudski Institute of America and the Institute on East Central Europe, Columbia University, 1995), 123–45.

borderland territories often turned out to Poland's detriment.⁹⁷ Polish diplomats also viewed Geneva as subject to the great-power interests of Britain and France. In particular, the Locarno Treaties (1925), which left Poland's borders with Germany open to revision, was considered a national disgrace.⁹⁸

The Polish disillusionment with Geneva and the Western powers was also related to the ways in which the new international system addressed the Colonial Question. The League was an institution that was not only supposed to guarantee peace, but also to extend the Anglo-Saxon concept of imperialism of free trade to former German and Ottoman territories, notably in the Middle East and Africa.⁹⁹ Still, Wilson's supporters in the United States and elsewhere did not fully abolish traditional colonialism, understood as a system in which colonies are politically and economically subjugated to their metropolises.¹⁰⁰ Instead, the mandate system was created as a compromise between Western internationalists and colonialists. According to the San Remo Resolution from April 25, 1920, East Africa (renamed Tanganyika) was assigned to Britain, Togoland and Cameroon mostly to France, and South West Africa to the Union of South Africa.¹⁰¹ The A, B, and C categories assigned to mandates represented their imagined stages of development

⁹⁷ See, for example, Henryk Batowski, *Między dwiema wojnami 1919-1939 : zarys historii dyplomatycznej* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001), 37–38.

⁹⁸ See Anna M. Cienciala, *Poland and the Western Powers 1938-1938: A Study in the Interdependence of Eastern and Western Europe* (University of Toronto Press, 1968); Anna M. Cienciala, "The Foreign Policy of Józef Piłsudski and Józef Beck, 1926-1939: Misconceptions and Interpretations," *The Polish Review* 56, no. 1/2 (2011): 111–51.

⁹⁹ See F. S. Northedge, *The League of Nations: Its Life and Times 1920-1946* (Holmes & Meier, 1986), 19–24; Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 19–50.

¹⁰⁰ See Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 12; Ronald E. Powaski, *Toward an Entangling Alliance: American Isolationism, Internationalism, and Europe, 1901-1950* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1991), 19–24; Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order 1916-1931* (Penguin UK, 2014), 19–27.

¹⁰¹ See Michael Dennis Callahan, *Mandates and Empire: The League of Nations and Africa, 1914-1931* (Brighton: Sussex Academic, 2008), 14–25.

and maturity for independence, which was supposed to be the eventual outcome of colonial tutelage.¹⁰²

In theory, all member states of the League of Nations, including Poland, enjoyed economic equality in mandated territories. Nevertheless, to draw particular benefits for themselves, the British and French manipulated not only the trade policies of their mandates but also, in the case of Mesopotamia (Iraq), their road to independence.¹⁰³ Moreover, the gradual closing of colonial markets added to the resentment of “hungry,” or revisionist, powers dissatisfied with the division of spoils after 1918. The resulting “micro-military”¹⁰⁴ colonial conflicts did not only foreshadow the collapse of declining empires, but also exposed the inadequacy of the entire international system, with their violation of the Geneva Protocol against the use of chemical weapons becoming a symbol of that inadequacy.¹⁰⁵ By the mid-1930s, as bloodbaths unfolded in peripheral imperial regions, the contradictions of the international system became apparent to elites in Warsaw.

In particular, the Italian use of force for colonial expansion undermined Wilsonian internationalism and introduced the Colonial Question to the international public as a search for “living space.” This encouraged Polish elites to approach the “problem” in more systemic ways that connected it to other “questions” related to emigration and modernity. They did not only start to campaign for Poland’s acquisition of mandates or concessions in Africa, but also promoted technocratic internationalist “solutions” to be implemented outside of the Polish state’s borders.

¹⁰² See Northedge, *The League of Nations*, 195–96; Powaski, *Toward an Entangling Alliance*, 12–14.

¹⁰³ See Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (Columbia University Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁴ See Stephen Jacobson, “Imperial Ambitions in an Era of Decline: Micromilitarism and the Eclipse of the Spanish Empire, 1858-1923,” in *Endless Empire: Spain’s Retreat, Europe’s Eclipse, America’s Decline*, by Alfred W. McCoy, Josep Maria Fradera, and Stephen Jacobson (University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 74–91.

¹⁰⁵ Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace: Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford University Press, 2002); James A. Chandler, “Spain and Her Moroccan Protectorate 1898-1927,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 10, no. 2 (1975): 301–22; George W. Baer, *Test Case: Italy, Ethiopia, and the League of Nations* (Hoover Press, 1976).

In turn, for the Polish actors under examination, the Colonial Question became an amalgam of different real and imaginary concerns that could be “solved” by navigating the international system.

The Colonial Milieu and the Sources They Left

This dissertation examines the ways in which statesmen and non-state actors looked for “solutions” to the series of “questions” discussed so far. I define them as a colonial milieu (*środowisko*), or as a loose group that attempted to advance Polish interests through political, economic, and cultural expansion in imperial spaces in South America and Africa—and thus solve what they perceived as Poland’s “questions.” They are not to be understood simply as a colonial lobby, which implies a group that lobbied the state for national expansion, since they did not act as such at all times. In fact, they did not always have the interests of the Polish state in mind, despite their self-identification as agents of “Poland,” a term that could change its meaning in different contexts.

It was not a common membership in institutions, such as the Maritime and Colonial League, which promoted Polish state expansion in Africa and South America, that united all of these individuals. Some worked within that League, others did not. They should rather be understood as a milieu ranging from Józef Beck, Poland’s foreign minister interested in securing Polish state interests around the globe, to Michał Zamoyski, an independent Polish farmer in Angola looking to create his own utopia in Africa. While certainly dreaming of power, they contemplated and executed projects that transcended conventional definitions of empire in the spirit of an era in which traditional forms of rule gave in to new forms of global governance. They believed that Poland’s multiple demographic, economic, political, and cultural problems could be addressed alongside the Colonial Question.

Their programs and strategies were never static. In fact, I demonstrate the ways in which, depending upon circumstances, the colonial milieu shifted their focus between what they perceived as different “problems” that could ostensibly be “solved” through colonial expansion in Africa or South America. In the 1920s, they imagined the channeling of emigration to South America as an act of managing the “surplus” Polish-Catholic population. At the turn of the decade, they became preoccupied with economic projects of colonial pioneering in Africa. The pendulum swung back to demographics circa 1936, but this time it was mostly the minorities whose emigration the colonial milieu wished to manage. By 1939, however, most of the colonial milieu separated the “Jewish” and nationality questions from the Colonial Question, returning to the view of Africa and South America predominantly as spaces where commercial growth could take place.

Since my research has followed the Polish colonial milieu and their projects, rather than a single institution, place, or individual, I have consulted multiple archives in several countries. In the first place, I have examined treatises, press articles, and journals produced in this milieu to determine the intellectual and cultural background of Polish colonial projects. I have also looked at audiovisual artifacts ranging from propaganda newsreels to interwar films set in the tropics, which can be found at the National Film Archive in Warsaw, while regional state archives in Poland hold other, less known but equally precious writings and letters. In combination with recorded interviews with members of the colonial milieu, these sources offer insights into the nature of their thinking and actions.

This is a truly international story. Since colonial expansion occurred abroad and as a result of cooperation between groups, individuals, and the Polish government, the bulk of my sources consists of consular correspondence, memoranda, and other diplomatic papers. Most of the extant documents of the Polish interwar state can be found not only at the Central Archive of Modern

Records in Warsaw but also at diaspora institutions in New York and London, where many of the files evacuated from Poland in September 1939 have remained. I have also examined the government files of the powers whose decisions had affected the Polish projects to the greatest extent. In consequence, many citations reference documents from the national and colonial archives in Berlin, London, Paris, Aix-en-Provence, and College Park. Because more of the colonial interactions under examination occurred in Africa, the geographic focus of this dissertation has resulted in fewer Spanish- and Portuguese-language sources cited.

Structure

While certain themes will inevitably elude periodization, the structure of my dissertation is largely chronological. The first half (Part I) tackles the formation of the colonial milieu between 1918 and the mid 1930s. It presents their ideology and agenda execution as a constant adjustment to geopolitical circumstances and as a process of reconciliation between group and state interests. Chapter 1 examines the birth of Polish colonial ideas under the partitions and their evolution in the 1920s. It shows that domestic fantasies about peasants becoming colonists overseas shaped the Polish program of channeling emigration to South America. Chapter 2 tells the (chronologically parallel) story of the colonial milieu's turn toward Africa and the emergence of the powerful Maritime and Colonial League, which formed a strong relationship with the Polish government in its "race to modernity." The following chapter narrates the first Polish "colonial actions" in the Portuguese and French empires in the early 1930s, by which Poland became embroiled in a geopolitical struggle with Germany and presented itself as a Western nation capable of culturally uplifting others without posing political threats to other Europeans. Chapter 4 examines the Polish mission to Liberia, which was a dramatic example of Promethean colonialism during which the

Polish state tried to assume financial and military control over that independent country all the while promoting a local independence movement.

The stories told in the second half of my dissertation (Part II) occurred over a more concentrated period, in the years 1935–1939, as the Polish government assumed full responsibility for colonial projects. Chapter 5 demonstrates the formation of the Polish government’s official colonial agenda in the second half of 1936 after the Italian annexation of Ethiopia generated the possibility of reinterpreting the Colonial Question in demographic terms. It also explains the Polish government’s decision to underline the demographic side of the Colonial Question in terms of what they perceived to be the relationship between Poland’s “overpopulation” and the overrepresentation of Jews in “urban” professions. Chapter 6 shows the Polish attempts to find multilateral solutions to the Colonial Question in the League of Nations as well as the subsequent use of colonial aspirations in Polish foreign policy during the period of geopolitical turbulence in the late 1930s. Chapter 7 further illuminates the ways in which the Polish government imagined the existence of the so-called Jewish Question, exploring the gradual exclusion of Jews from colonial projects. Lastly, Chapter 8 examines the “realistic” Polish colonial projects in the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland and in southeastern Africa in the late 1930s.

Chapter 1

Emigrants into Colonists

“Our overseas expansion, although it cannot follow the Western path of generating centers of culture in the aftermath of military conquest, can and must undergo the reverse process of rising to the point of political independence through economic and cultural populating [*zasiedlenie*].”¹

In the 1920s, a group of emigration activists viewed Polish settlements in South America as having the potential to help the Polish state economically and politically, from which they also derived that new areas could be “pioneered” around the globe. By the end of the decade, this “colonial pioneering” became the domain of a fragmentary Polish state, or a collection of different state and semi-state agencies, some of them competing against one another. Furthermore, as the Polish institutional mosaic began to expand across borders and oceans, interests of individuals, groups, and nations had to be reconciled. This intertwined process of forming colonial ideas and negotiating their implementation had already started decades before a Polish state emerged from the ashes of World War I. Indeed, nationalist elites of partitioned Poland imagined peasant settlements as “colonies,” or compact and isolated outposts that would not only incubate but *generate* a Polish-Catholic national identity. This chapter demonstrates the ways in which Polish colonial ideas about emigration emerged, developed, and affected emigration policies in South America.

The Galician Origins

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the rapid population growth and the slow rate of the industrial revolution in Eastern Europe combined with the liberal immigration policies of

¹ Gustaw Załęcki, *I. O zasadniczych pojęciach polityki kolonialnej i kolonizacyjnej. II. Uwagi nad gospodarczym stosunkiem człowieka “białego” do “kolorowego,”* Studia Kolonialne (Warsaw: Biblioteka Polska, 1928), 8.

the United States and countries in South America to entice masses of landless Polish-speaking peasants from partitioned Poland to search for economic opportunities overseas.² Although emigration was cyclical and seasonal at first, with Germany and northeastern France being the most popular destinations, departures for the Americas became more common after 1880. In Brazil, in particular, the abolition of slavery in 1888 increased the demand for both cheap labor and independent farmers. In order to encourage peasant immigration from Europe, the Brazilian government took back territorial concessions previously granted to private entities to offer land plots to newcomers and to finance their maritime transportation.³ As a result, the largest numbers of peasants from partitioned Poland settled in the Brazilian states of Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul, and Santa Catarina, while many others emigrated to the neighboring Argentinian region of Misiones. Moreover, smaller groups of industrial workers from the Russian-dominated Kingdom of Poland came to Buenos Aires and Rosario after the revolutionary period of 1905.⁴ By 1914, according to one scholar's estimate, 3.5 million emigrants, including many Jews, had left the Polish lands, including 100,000 leaving for Brazil and 68,900 for Argentina.⁵ In this manner, the major clusters of emigrants from Poland to South America neighbored one another in a region along the borders of Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay. They became known as Polish "colonies," but this was not due to the linguistic ambiguity of the term only.

At the turn of the century, some Polish nationalists, especially those connected to the *Endecja*, considered this emigration detrimental to the number and strength of the Polish "element" that remained at home. By 1900, while occasionally entertaining fantasies about the wilderness of

² See Andrzej Pilch, *Emigracja z ziem polskich w czasach nowożytnych i najnowszych (XVIII-XX w.)* (Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1984), 7; Edward Kołodziej, *Wychodźstwo zarobkowe z Polski 1918-1939* (Książka i Wiedza, 1982), 25.

³ See Kołodziej, *Wychodźstwo zarobkowe z Polski 1918-1939*, 28–31.

⁴ See *Ibid.*

⁵ See *Ibid.*

South America testing the strength of the Polish “element” and eliminating its weak offspring, Roman Dmowski and his followers ultimately came to believe that emigration squandered the nation’s human capital around the world.⁶ At the same time, many national and imperial leaders from Eastern Europe worried about the epidemic of so-called “white slavery,” whereby young women, especially from Habsburg Galicia, found themselves lured into forced prostitution in South American brothels.⁷ Anti-Semitism was often responsible for strong reactions to the end-of-the-century revelations of Slavic women prostituting themselves overseas, as many travel agents allegedly responsible for tricking the more or less willing women to prostitute themselves abroad happened to be Jewish.⁸ In addition to the nationalist fear that emigrants would be lost for the Polish cause and to the “white slavery” panic, the conservative concern with losing workhands and the progressive concern with the wellbeing of emigrants persuaded Galicia’s elites of the need to limit emigration and control it when inevitable. In fact, most Polish leaders came to accept that emigration was a “necessary evil,” given Poland’s partitioned status and their supposed inability to tackle the causes of unemployment, namely the slow industrial development and lack of agrarian reforms.⁹ One of the leading poets of partitioned Poland, the progressive or positivist Maria Konopnicka, went as far as to promote emigration to Brazil as the Polish nation’s mythological

⁶ Michał Starczewski, “Mrzonki racjonalnej kolonizacji w duchu narodowym: Roman Dmowski i polska emigracja do Brazylii,” *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 59, no. 2 (2015): 63–74.

⁷ See Keely Stauter-Halsted, “Moral Panic and the Prostitute in Partitioned Poland: Middle-Class Respectability in Defense of the Modern Nation,” *Slavic Review* 68, no. 3 (2009): 557–81.

⁸ Tara Zahra, “Travel Agents on Trial: Policing Mobility in East Central Europe, 1889–1989,” *Past & Present* 223, no. 1 (May 1, 2014): 161–93. One report of a Polish female government agent from the interwar period confirms that women were both willing and tricked into pursuing prostitution overseas, and that Jewish male individuals played a role in their journeys. See Maria Biskupska, “Raport z pobytu w Argentynie /29/I.25/II. 1930 r./,” 1930, 49–59, 2/428/3.1/71, Akta Kazimierza i Janiny Warchałowskich, AAN.

⁹ Jerzy Mazurek, *Kraj a emigracja: ruch ludowy wobec wychodźstwa chłopskiego do krajów Ameryki Łacińskiej (do 1939 roku)* (Warsaw: Biblioteka Iberyjska, 2006), 119–40.

journey to the promised land, a bastion from which the fight for national liberation would be carried out.¹⁰

In 1894, a medley of nationalists, conservatives, progressives, and peasant leaders created the Polish Commercial-Geographic Society (*Polskie Towarzystwo Handlowo-Geograficzne*) in Lwów to encourage the channeling of the emigration of Polish-speaking peasants from Habsburg Galicia and the Kingdom of Poland to South America, especially Brazil.¹¹ The leading members of the Society – ranging from conservative landowners like Kazimierz Warchałowski (1872–1943)



Figure 1. Kazimierz Warchałowski, the leading promoter of the colonial idea in emigration policies. Source: Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, *Opis polskich terenów kolonizacyjnych w Peru* (Warsaw: Naukowy Instytut Emigracyjny, 1930).

(Figure 1) and Stanisław Kłobukowski to peasant leaders like Michał Pankiewicz (1887-1980) to Catholic priests like Józef Anusz – believed in different economic principles but agreed that Polish national identity was related to Catholicism. In effect, they advocated for the need to concentrate the settlements of Polish-speaking peasants, many of whom did not have a strong national identity, in particular spaces around the globe in order to stop them from dispersing and to create the right circumstances for developing their “Polishness” abroad. Looking across the Atlantic for suitable areas,

Warchałowski and others admired the “pioneering” efforts of their compatriots-in-the-making transplanted to the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland and described their settlements as “colonies” that, with a little help from “nationally conscious” elites, resisted assimilation and served as national incubators. After independence, the thinking continued, the Polish “colonies”

¹⁰ Maria Konopnicka, *Pan Balcer w Brazylii* (Warsaw: Gebethner i Wolff, 1910).

¹¹ Stanisław Kłobukowski, *Wspomnienia z podróży po Brazylii, Argentynie, Paragwaju, Patagonii i Ziemi Ognistej* (Lwów: W.A. Szykowski, 1898), iii–iv.

would turn into the Polish state's political and economic outposts, especially as they received aid from patriotic institutions from the metropole.¹²

Colonial-minded emigration activists considered the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland the most suitable location for Polish-speaking peasants for a reason. For example, in the mind of Kazimierz Warchałowski, a member of Dmowski's clandestine National League, the channeling of emigration from partitioned Poland to the Brazilian state of Paraná made incubating the Polish-Catholic nature of peasants possible because the pressure of modernity in the region was weak. In his "guidebook for travelers and emigrants" to Paraná published in 1903 Warchałowski wrote:

"Today, it can be argued that the only country that we can colonize is Brazil, which fulfills our most important condition: the ability to acquire nationality. We arrive in a country with a lower culture; a sparsely populated country with a poor degree of education, where our emigrant (*wychodźca*) contributes, besides his hands capable of work, besides perseverance, his still considerable social formation (*urobienie*), attachment to the land, to the church, his deep religiosity; these are the conditions on which we can build the future. Therefore, those who appreciate the faith of our ancestors, who love our mother tongue, who would not like to see their grandchildren speaking foreign languages and losing their faith in God and attachment to religion, will always choose Brazil."¹³

Warchałowski subsequently contrasted this pre-modern setting, where the Catholic and Polish-speaking peasants, presumably not fully national, could *acquire* their nationality, with the melting pot of the United States, whose economic opportunities guaranteed material wellbeing but where

¹² See Mazurek, *Kraj a emigracja*, 119–40.

¹³ See Kazimierz Warchałowski, *Do Parany. Przewodnik dla podróżujących i wychodźców* (Kraków, 1903), 5.

modern temptations made emigrants lose their “nationality” (*narodowość*).¹⁴ Likewise, another member of the National League associated with the Commercial-Geographic Society, the geologist and traveler Józef Siemiradzki, called Paran  a “New Poland.” He suggested that its creation was possible partly thanks to the departure of Italian and German emigrants for more industrially developed Brazilian states, which left the more agricultural and less modern Paran  to Polish peasants.¹⁵ Ironically, while Dmowski himself generally opposed emigration, colonial-minded emigration activists, many of whom also participated in his clandestine movement, transplanted his “Pia ” concept of Polish nationalism to South America. Fortunately for them, this Polish “propaganda of emigration,” as one emigrant called it, enjoyed acquiescence from the partitioning powers, which did not generally mind the departure of their problematic Polish subjects.¹⁶

In 1920, looking back at the exodus from Galicia, the famous Polish sociologist Florian Znaniecki and his collaborator William Thomas described colonial-minded Polish emigration activists as “radicals who believed in the possibility of making the Brazilian state of Paran  a Polish state and at the same time hoped to direct there some of the excess country proletariat, and thus indirectly to improve the condition of manor servants, which was particularly poor in the eastern part of the country.”¹⁷ At the same time, however, Znaniecki and Thomas confirmed the traditional nature of Polish emigration to Paran , since “there was no idea of any break with the traditional system (...). Not individuals, but whole families were going. (...) And their destination in their own minds was perfectly determined and clear; they had, or thought they had, direct or indirect communications with Paran  that a very popular priest who favored the movement was

¹⁴ Ibid., 5–6.

¹⁵ J zef Siemiradzki, *La Nouvelle Pologne,  tat de Paran  (Br sil)* (Brussels: F. Larcier, 1899), 4–5.

¹⁶ W adys aw Go dzikowski, “Wspomnienia z Brazylii” n.d., 32–37, 12564/1, Ossolineum.

¹⁷ Florian Znaniecki and William Isaac Thomas, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, vol. V. Organization and Disorganization in America (Boston: The Gorham Press, 1920), 8–9.

awaiting them on the other side. (...) the great majority imagined everything to be as in Poland, only better.”¹⁸ As the sociologists pointed out, the Polish peasants did not always find everything to be better in Paraná, and their emigration would subside as news of emigrant misfortune and failure reached the Polish lands. At the same time, however, Znaniecki and Thomas’s statement suggested that in Paraná, peasants essentially wished to continue their traditional lives and to resist assimilation. This pointed to the possibility that Polish “colonies,” or compact and isolated communities, could emerge in that setting just as Warchałowski and others hoped.

Notwithstanding the efforts to concentrate emigrants in South America, during the period of partitions the Polish elites usually rejected projects of settlement in locations to which emigration had not already taken place. In 1908, for example, Wiktor Skołyszewski, a peasant representative, informed the Galician Sejm (Parliament) about a French proposition to grant Polish emigration the monopoly for settlement in Madagascar, but the conservative majority of the diet dismissed the offer as a joke.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the linguistic ambiguity of “colonial” terms, combined with the imagination of South America as “pre-modern” and highly agrarian, gradually contributed to the conflation of emigration with “colonial pioneering,” or pioneering new areas for settlement. This conflation only grew stronger once former activists of the Commercial-Geographic Society emerged as directors of state and semi-state institutions in independent Poland and adopted increasingly more ambitious plans for the emigrants under their supervision.

Imagining Emigrants as Colonists in Interwar Poland

Many factors contributed to the flow of people out of the newly created Polish state, which was put together from three different partitions and suffered from unemployment and inflation,

¹⁸ Ibid., V. Organization and Disorganization in America:9–10.

¹⁹ Jan Stapiński, *Pamiętniki*, ed. Krzysztof Dunin-Wąsowicz (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1958), 294–95.

especially once the legality of emigration was enshrined in the country's March Constitution of 1921.²⁰ There was a brief pause in trans-Atlantic migration immediately following World War I, with shipping lines preoccupied with soldiers and armaments returning home.²¹ Still, the Polish countryside once again filled up with landless peasants eager to make their fortunes abroad as Stanisław Grabski's agrarian reform turned out to be a compromise with conservative landowners. In 1925, moreover, came a tariff war with Weimar Germany, otherwise a crucial export market, exacerbating the economic crisis and forcing many individuals and families to look for economic opportunities abroad.²² It was only the U.S. immigration quotas and economic stagnation elsewhere in Europe that prevented emigration from reaching a very large scale, resulting in Poland's relatively small population deficit of about 1,000,000.²³ Still, in the 1920s, given the continuously large numbers of Polish emigrants leaving the Baltic shores, Polish leaders felt compelled to formulate an emigration program for South America to secure its stake in the process.

In December 1918, a group of emigration activists from South America formed the Polish Colonial Society (*Polskie Towarzystwo Kolonialne*, or PTK). Its name was a reference to the Polish Emigration Society (*Polskie Towarzystwo Emigracyjne*, or PTE) established in 1907 in Lwów as a successor to the Polish Commercial-Geographic Society. The PTK remained relatively inactive for the first chaotic years of Polish independence but emerged as the activist backbone of

²⁰ See Mazurek, *Kraj a emigracja*, 142–43.

²¹ Anna Kicingier, *Polityka Emigracyjna II Rzeczypospolitej* (Warsaw: Central European Forum for Migration Research, 2005), 7.

²² Zbigniew Landau and Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Gospodarka Polski międzywojennej, 1918-1939: Wielki kryzys 1930-1935* (Książka i Wiedza, 1982), 39–57; Mariusz Wołos, *Alfred Chłapowski (1874-1940): biografia ambasadora Polski we Francji* (Adam Marszałek, 2001), 141; Zdzisław Wroniak, *Polityka polska wobec Francji w latach 1925-1932* (Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1987), 48–49.

²³ See Halina Janowska, *Emigracja zarobkowa z Polski 1918-1939* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1981), 155; Edward Kołodziej, "Emigracja z ziem polskich od końca XIX w. do czasów współczesnych i tworzenie się skupisk polonijnych," in *Emigracja z ziem polskich w XX w. Drogi awansu emigrantów*, ed. Adam Koseski (Póltusk: Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczna, 1998), 14.

the state's emigration program in 1922.²⁴ According to the first issue of its official weekly magazine,²⁵ *Wychodźca* (*Emigrant*), from May 14, the purpose of the PTK was “to take care of emigration (*wychodźstwo*) and to channel it into a consciously creative movement for the benefit of the country and its citizens.”²⁶ The fulfilling of this ambitious goal was possible thanks to the intertwining of the PTK and the Polish government at the personal level.

In particular, the PTK was a supporter of the Emigration Office (*Urząd Emigracyjny*), an institution created under the auspices of Poland's Ministry of Labor and Social Assistance to control departures, maintain statistics, and negotiate international migration treaties, among other tasks.²⁷ The president of the Emigration Office from July 1922 to his death in April 1923 was Józef Okołowicz, the founder of both the PTK and the earlier PTE from Galicia, and a man sympathetic

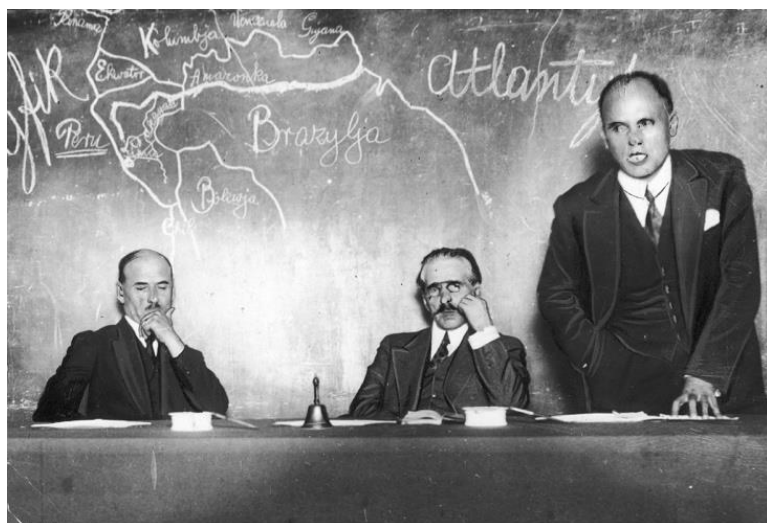


Figure 2. Emigration activists: Kazimierz Warchałowski sitting first from the left, Michał Pankiewicz standing. Source: NAC 1-Z-5.

to the idea of channeled emigration to South America.²⁸ Furthermore, another prominent leader of the PTK, Michał Pankiewicz (Figure 2), was named an “emigration attaché” in South America;²⁹ a position created under the auspices of the

²⁴ “Polskie Towarzystwo Kolonialne i jego działalność,” *Wychodźca*, July 15, 1923, 1–4.

²⁵ “Od Wydawnictwa,” *Wychodźca*, July 2, 1922, 1.

²⁶ *Wychodźca*, May 14, 1922.

²⁷ Kicingier, *Polityka Emigracyjna II Rzeczypospolitej*, 31–32; Kołodziej, *Wychodźstwo zarobkowe z Polski 1918-1939*, 42–55; Jerzy Łazor, “Polityka migracyjna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej – próba syntezy,” in *Od kwestii robotniczej do nowoczesnej kwestii socjalnej. Studia z polskiej polityki społecznej XX i XXI wieku*, ed. Paweł Grata, vol. III (Rzeszów, 2015), 46–47; Mazurek, *Kraj a emigracja*, 143.

²⁸ “Cenny dokument,” *Wychodźca*, June 4, 1922, 1; “Nowy Dyrektor Urzędu Emigracyjnego,” *Wychodźca*, July 16, 1922, 1–2; “Józef Okołowicz,” *Wychodźca*, April 22, 1923, 1–3.

²⁹ Michał Pankiewicz, “Biebrza - Amazonka - Wisła. Tom II,” n.d., 2, Rps Ossol.15612/II, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide consular assistance to emigrants abroad.³⁰ In this manner, the PTK, renamed the PTE in 1924, entered a relationship of symbiosis with the Emigration Office, with the former's activists attending to the needs of emigrants and suggesting destinations potentially hospitable to prospective expatriates. The PTK/PTE was still able to criticize the Polish government's policies: for example, its official paper, *Wychodźca*, critiqued Warsaw's move to let a private company administer a hotel for departing emigrants.³¹ Most often, however, the PTK/PTE supported official initiatives devised to encourage financial and commercial exchange with the diaspora, including the opening of a Polish bank and commercial chamber in Curitiba, Paraná.³²



Figure 3. Mieczysław Lepecki. Source: NAC 1-W-269.

It was individuals spanning both the PTK/PTE and the Emigration Office who envisioned the emergence of semi-independent “colonies” of emigrants serving as gateways to Poland's overseas influence and expansion. For example, Witold Szyszło, a consul in Lima and supporter of settlement in Peru, argued in *Wychodźca* that Poland should channel (*skanalizować*) emigration to the climatically moderate areas in South America. He hoped that Polish emigrants in such places would not “become denationalized” (*wynaradawiać się*) and would instead

generate necessary “colonial goods” to be exchanged for products from Poland.³³ In February 1921, Wacław Babiński, a high-ranking official at the Consular Department of Poland's foreign ministry, authored a memo likewise arguing that all Polish emigration should be channeled to

³⁰ Wacław Babiński, “Opieka nad wychodźstwem i reemigracją,” *Wychodźca*, May 14, 1922, 3–5.

³¹ “Przed decyzją Rady Ministrów,” *Wychodźca*, June 18, 1922, 1–2.

³² “Bank polski i izba handlowa w Kurytybie,” *Wychodźca*, May 28, 1922, 5.

³³ Witold Szyszło, “Widoki kolonizacji w krajach Ameryki Południowej,” *Wychodźca*, March 29, 1925, 2–3.

South America, in particular to Paraná.³⁴ Another activist was connected to the Polish military, Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki (1897–1969) (Figure 3), and similarly preferred South America for its availability of inexpensive land. He encouraged peasants to take advantage of Brazil's federal settlement programs in Paraná and to purchase plots of land in the country's other southern province, Rio Grande do Sul.³⁵ An adventurer, leading colonial activist, ranking military officer, and Marshal Piłsudski's aide-de-camp, Lepecki will be a recurrent figure in this study.³⁶

As the PTE promoted South America for practical reasons, certain activists introduced the image of a peasant-pioneer, or a colonist, to further promote the channeling of Polish emigration to the continent. One of the most important believers in the pioneering prowess of Polish peasants



Figure 4. Apoloniusz Zarychta. Edited from: NAC 1-Z-35.

was Apoloniusz Zarychta (1899–1969) (Figure 4), a former geography major at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, fighter in Piłsudski's legions, professional cartographer, and one of Poland's leading colonial thinkers.³⁷ By the turn of the decade, Zarychta defended his Ph.D. dissertation about the importance of emigration for the state and began to teach the subject at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lwów.³⁸ Jan Koziński (1914–2000), better known under his wartime alias of Jan Karski,

described Zarychta, his former professor, as a cross between a geographer, traveler, and writer on the one hand, and a “politician with a vision of a great-power

³⁴ Wacław Babiński, “Memoriał Urzędu dla Spraw Wychodźczych w sprawie emigracji,” February 5, 1921, 702/13/123, Polish Legation in Rio de Janeiro, PIASA.

³⁵ Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, “Rządowa kolonizacja federalna i polska prywatna w Paranie,” *Wychodźca*, February 24, 1924, 3–6.

³⁶ See his personal dossier: “Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki,” n.d., 641, Kolekcja Akt Personalnych, CAW WBH.

³⁷ Waldemar Piasecki, *Jan Karski, jedno życie: kompletna opowieść*, vol. I (1914–1939) Madagaskar (Kraków: Insignis, 2015), 136; Wacław Jędrzejewicz, *Wspomnienia* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1993), 200.

³⁸ Witold Michałowski, “Śladami Pana Balcera,” in *Teki Sarmatów* (Pruszków: Rewasz, 2009), 135–36; Piasecki, *Jan Karski, jedno życie*, I (1914–1939) Madagaskar:365.

state with a strong diaspora and even colonies,” on the other.³⁹ Indeed, Zarychta referred to the Poles as a “race” that could undergo behavioral changes in Brazil.⁴⁰ He argued that South America’s environment encouraged the primordial nature of Polish peasants to resurface:

“[In Paraná] I always felt as if I were (...) flipping through illustrated books about the early Slavic world. Everything appeared fabulous [*bajeczny*] to me: great, mystical and always peaceful baldachins [*baldachy*] of the pines, wonderful sun, nature, and man. (...) I have learned to value the spine of our race – the Polish peasant. The strong, relentless, brave, stubborn, stingy, temerarious, practical, and distrustful peasant. The type of a nature-conquering Piast was manifesting itself to me more clearly, and I found it here. (...) my thought floated to those distant times when the tribe of farmers and singers ruled the virgin areas from the Dnieper to the Elbe.”⁴¹

In this manner, echoing Warchałowski’s earlier arguments, Zarychta suggested that Brazil’s agrarian economy and territorial expanse awakened the ancient pioneering nature of Polish peasants. He feared that, once assimilated into local Brazilian culture, Polish peasants might be lost for the nation, which, despite his preference for Piłsudski, was imagined as exclusively Polish-Catholic and referred to the Piasts, not the Jagiellonians. Moreover, the Church acquiesced to this inadvertent identification of the Catholic faith with the Polish nation around the globe. By 1931, Poland’s Primate, August Hlond, received an official blessing from the Holy See to assume a protectorate over the spiritual life of the Polish flock worldwide, resulting in priests specifically trained to be sent out to Polish colonies abroad.⁴²

³⁹ Piasecki, *Jan Karski, jedno życie*, I (1914-1939) Madagaskar:365.

⁴⁰ Apoloniusz Zarychta, “Polskość i polono-brazylianie,” *Wychodźca*, July 20, 1924, 3–10.

⁴¹ Apoloniusz Zarychta, *Wśród polskich conquistadorów (plemię zdobywców). Wrażenia i przygody z podróży po południowej Brazylii* (Warsaw: Leon Wolnicki, 1930), 213–14.

⁴² “Report of the German Consulate General in Poznań,” August 19, 1931, RAV Posen 6, PAAA. Warsaw received promising reports regarding the activities of Hlond’s clerics in South America. Stefan Markowski, for example,

The fascination with the Polish peasant's "primordality" was common among other liberal writers. Aleksander Świętochowski, for instance, contrasted Polish emigrants in the United States, where the Anglo-Saxon "race" gave them an impulse to develop but also assimilated them, with those living in Brazil, which "did not awaken their energy but preserved their primordality."⁴³ By the 1930s, the image of peasants-pioneers in South America became commonly promoted in film productions from the period. One documentary, for example, showed colonists from Poland felling trees, clearing forests, and harnessing the energy of waterfalls.⁴⁴ In addition to those depicting peasants, other moving images suggested the benefits of cooperation between Poland and its "colonies" in South America. In the feature film *Dziewczyna szuka miłości* (*Girl Seeks Love*) from the following year, a Polish entrepreneur teams up with group of wealthy countrymen from Brazil to launch a commercial airline between Poland and Brazil. Jerzy Zamiejski, a young machinist and aviation lover selected to pilot the first experimental flight from Warsaw to Rio de Janeiro, completes the quest despite serious technical difficulties. At the end of the motion picture, Jerzy reunites with his love, his boss's daughter, and the businessmen behind the project launch a Polish-Brazilian partnership.⁴⁵

The interest in the pioneering nature of Polish peasants also stemmed from perceptions of the West's racial prejudice. Writing in *Wychodźca* and referring to the U.S. immigration quotas introduced for eastern and southern Europeans in 1924, Wojciech Szukiewicz lamented the

pointed out that the Salesian Society in Chile was eager to import friars from Poland, considered "excellent workers and good priests. See "Stefan Markowski to the Director of the Emigration Office," January 28, 1931, 14, 2/322/3637, MSZ, AAN.

⁴³ Aleksander Świętochowski in Janusz Makarczyk, *Nowa Brazylia* (Warsaw: M. Arcta, 1929), 6.

⁴⁴ "Polskie osadnictwo w Brazylii," 1936, MF.0785, FNAI.

⁴⁵ Romuald Gantkowski, "Dziewczyna szuka miłości," 1937, FNAI. The film might have been based on a true story. In the mid-1930s, a group of pilots and aviation amateurs proposed establishing a permanent airline connection to carry post between Warsaw and Buenos Aires. According to one of the project's authors, such an airline was feasible from a technical point of view and would aid Poland's expansion in South America via transfer points in the "wealthiest Polish communities" of Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba, Porto Alegre, and Montevideo. See "Notatka dla p.D.D.K. w sprawie polskiej linii lotniczej Warszawa - Buenos Aires," n.d., 2/322/9577, MSZ, AAN.

implicit American classification of Polish emigrants as an inferior and undesirable racial “element” and attributed it to concealed anti-Semitism present in the United States. He argued that, in contrast to Jews – possibly inferior in his mind, too – Poles constituted a “Nordic Slavic element.”⁴⁶ Another article echoing racial discontents was written in response to a French project of hiring Polish miners to work in phosphate and iron ore mines in Algeria. Its author, critical of the French, argued that a black worker’s situation in Transvaal, a territory belonging to the Union of South Africa, should be a “cause of jealousy” for Poles working in the French empire.⁴⁷ Yet another contributor criticized his fellow emigrants in the United States for falling behind African-Americans in education while considering themselves racially superior.⁴⁸ In this manner, while worrying about the classification of their countrymen as not fully white, emigration writers also feared that Westerners treated *Murzyni* better than Poles.⁴⁹ The channeling of emigration to South America, where Polish peasants would form homogenous settlements, was imagined as proving their pioneering animus to the West and reflected qualms about the position of the Polish “race” in the imagined international hierarchy of racial dominance.

The PTK/PTE was not united in the hope of maintaining isolated, wealthy, and nationally pure “colonies” in South America, however. An engineer from Buenos Aires, for example, wrote that emigrants’ “inability to isolate themselves from the influence of their surroundings, consisting of representatives of diverse races and nationalities, forces them to blend into one harmonious whole.”⁵⁰ Another author, reporting the state of Polish “colonies” in the Argentinian province of

⁴⁶ Wojciech Szukiewicz, “W sprawie polskiej polityki wychodźczej,” *Wychodźca*, January 18, 1925, 3–12.

⁴⁷ Stanisław Klimowicz, “Wychodźstwo do Algieru, prawa czarnych robotników w Transwalu a naszych - we Francji,” *Wychodźca*, February 3, 1924, 2–3.

⁴⁸ Czesław Łukaszkiewicz in “Polacy i Murzyni w Ameryce,” *Wychodźca*, August 23, 1930, 7.

⁴⁹ T.N. Nittman, “Nędza polska na afrykańskim brzegu,” *Wychodźca*, June 7, 1925, 3–4.

⁵⁰ Włodzimierz Gałeczki, “Czy możliwą jest rzeczą tworzenie czysto polskich kolonii w Argentynie?,” *Wychodźca*, January 20, 1924, 11.

Misiones, worried not only about their quick pace of assimilation into local culture but also about their national origins being other than Polish-Catholic, stating that “our citizens of the Greek-Catholic confession, who call themselves Ukrainians, (...) adopt an indifferent and at times hostile attitude toward Poles.”⁵¹ Other contributors feared a corrupt, profiteering leadership of more nationally united “colonies,” too. In July 1922, the weekly received letters in which two “intellectuals” denounced Kazimierz Głuchowski, the Polish consul in Curitiba. Głuchowski was accused of profiting from the sale of lands to “naïve” peasant arrivals and advertising his “latifundium,” located near an exclave for lepers across the Guarapuava River in Paraná, as an “Eden” for emigrants.⁵² At loggerheads with the consul at the time, the author did not fail to mention that Głuchowski had been removed from his function a couple of weeks earlier.⁵³ Beyond the potential for assimilation and exploitation at the hands of dishonest officials, other voices worried about South America’s climate. The Catholic weekly *Gazeta Świąteczna*, for example, published a letter from an emigrant in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul complaining that the weather there was worse than in Africa: it was nearly 40°C, and the “air was so humid that one had the feeling of carrying a metal cloak on one’s shoulders.”⁵⁴

Despite the criticisms, the PTE adopted the channeling of emigration to South America as its all but official policy in May 1926.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the PTE’s structure expanded to promote it in scientific ways. In August 1926, the Research Institute for the Study of Emigration and Colonization (*Instytut Naukowy do Badań Emigracji i Kolonizacji*) was created as an autonomous

⁵¹ “Kolonie polskie w Argentynie,” *Wychodźca*, June 18, 1922, 3.

⁵² “Dwa listy z Parany,” *Wychodźca*, July 23, 1922, 7.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Witold K., “Nowiny. Z miasta Porto-Alegre,” *Gazeta Świąteczna*, no. 2465 (April 29, 1928): 4.

⁵⁵ “Najważniejszy nakaz chwili w dziedzinie emigracji,” *Wychodźca*, May 30, 1926, 1–2.

section of the PTE.⁵⁶ Its founders included professors from the Jan Kazimierz University in Lwów such as Stanisław Głąbiński, a center-right political economist, and Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska, a known socialist suffragette and senator. The aim of the Research Institute – which soon became independent of the PTE thanks to a government subsidy⁵⁷ – was scientific analysis of emigration and colonial matters for the sake of realizing “our nation’s need of expansion” and preventing “our Polish human material from becoming the compost for other nations.”⁵⁸ At the same time, the Research Institute was not to be involved in practical projects but was to simply publish its findings in its *Kwartalnik* (Quarterly) for use by the government and other interested institutions. In the opening statement of the *Kwartalnik*’s first issue, Głąbiński cited Thomas R. Malthus’s theory of overpopulation, as well as different European examples of state-directed emigration, to argue that Poland should secure its emigrants’ national rights and welfare abroad.⁵⁹

While Głąbiński served as president of the Research Institute, its most important figure was Gustaw Załęcki, a professor of political economy from Lwów and author of an explicitly “colonial” Polish emigration program.⁶⁰ Załęcki laid out his views in the multi-volume “Colonial Studies” (*Studia Kolonialne*), a series of publications covering topics ranging from policies of agricultural settlement in “economically young” countries to economic relations between “white” and “colored” men.⁶¹ Załęcki defined “colonies” broadly as entities resulting from the “emanation of social forces of a collective in a foreign territory” and demonstrating the will to preserve a

⁵⁶ Later known as the Emigration Research Institute (*Naukowy Instytut Emigracyjny*) and, subsequently, as the Emigration and Colonial Research Institute (*Naukowy Instytut Emigracyjny i Kolonialny*).

⁵⁷ Stanisław Głąbiński, “Naukowy Instytut Emigracyjny,” *Kwartalnik Naukowego Instytutu Emigracyjnego* 2, no. 3 (1927): 5–16.

⁵⁸ Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, “Naukowy Instytut Emigracyjny,” *Wychodźca*, September 15, 1929, 2.

⁵⁹ Stanisław Głąbiński, “Słowo wstępne,” *Kwartalnik Naukowego Instytutu do Badań Emigracji i Kolonizacji* I (1926): 3–7.

⁶⁰ Lepecki, “Naukowy Instytut Emigracyjny,” 2.

⁶¹ Gustaw Załęcki, *Szkice do gospodarczej teorii europejskiego osadnictwa rolnego w krajach gospodarczo-młodych*, *Studia Kolonialne* (Biblioteka Polska, 1927); Załęcki, I. *O zasadniczych pojęciach polityki kolonialnej i kolonizacyjnej. II. Uwagi nad gospodarczym stosunkiem człowieka “białego” do “kolorowego.”*

“permanent connectivity” to the collective that constituted the source of that “emanation.”⁶² Perfectly aware of the multiple meanings of the term “colony” (*kolonia*), Załęcki synthesized definitions from scholars such as Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and E. Morton Jellinek to distinguish between settlement colonies, political colonies, and capitalist colonies. Likewise, while noting the etymological connection between that term and agricultural settlement,⁶³ the author gave an expansive definition of “colonization” (*kolonizacja*), not to be confused with “settlement” (*osadnictwo*).⁶⁴ Załęcki suggested that not all acts of settlement served as a basis for “national colonization” (*kolonizacja narodowościowa*), whose purpose was taking control of its object territory by a specific group of colonists. According to him, colonization was therefore associated with both settlement and conquest.⁶⁵ In this way, Załęcki set specific parameters for understanding the meaning of “colonies” and “colonization,” distinguishing the latter phenomenon from emigration, the Research Institute’s other field of expertise.

Nevertheless, his continued use of the phrase “emigration-colonization” (*emigracyjno-kolonizacyjny*) corresponded to his conviction that (Polish-Catholic) emigrants could become colonists if provided with enough state assistance. In fact, Załęcki’s objectives included prescribing a colonial program for Poland in addition to clarifying linguistic and sociological nuances to his colleagues from the PTE. Referring to the conclusions of his earlier study, the political economist argued against voices doubting the possibility of colonization in a world where all territory had already been assigned to states. He responded that military conquest did not necessarily create lasting colonies and underlined that “our overseas expansion (...) cannot follow

⁶² Załęcki, *I. O zasadniczych pojęciach polityki kolonialnej i kolonizacyjnej. II. Uwagi nad gospodarczym stosunkiem człowieka “białego” do “kolorowego,”* 16–17.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 60–63.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

the Western path of generating centers of culture in the aftermath of military conquest.” Instead, Polish settlements were to “undergo the reverse process of rising to the point of political independence through economic and cultural populating [*zasiedlenie*].”⁶⁶ Consequently, the centuries-long Polish cultivation of culture abroad, the argument continued, served as a proof that “our Nation’s Fatherland” (*Ojczyzna naszego Narodu*) was not assigned to any particular territory



Figure 5. Polish peasants in Paraná. Intellectuals like Załęcki and Pankiewicz wished to preserve the “primordiality” of such settlers. Source: NAC 1-Z-264.

and could be located in several locations simultaneously.⁶⁷

Załęcki’s colonial program consisted of turning emigration into “national colonization” (*kolonizacja narodowościowa*) to build a “New Poland” overseas, namely in the southern Brazilian states where clusters of Poles already existed: Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul, and Santa Catarina. Together with the Argentinian province of Misiones, these Brazilian states comprised

a Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland that would become an object of Polish colonial ambitions in the 1930s. Meanwhile, however, Załęcki underlined the need for a careful selection of colonial “pioneers” (Figure 5), ideally agriculturalists currently living in Poland, for whom farming was the highest value and who would pave the way for industrial workers. He advocated that Poles in Paraná should refrain from building modern infrastructure such as railroads until they completely colonized that state, lest other nationalities be tempted to settle there. At the same time, the activist argued that Polish colonists, as opposed to Germans, did not present a political threat,

⁶⁶ Ibid., 8.

⁶⁷ Gustaw Załęcki, *Polska polityka kolonialna i kolonizacyjna. Zarys teoretyczny opracowany w świetle problemu zamorskiej ekspansji narodowej*, Studia Kolonialne (Warsaw: Biblioteka Polska, 1925), 129.

since they would not be interested in subverting the Brazilian state.⁶⁸ As Zarychta, Załęcki appreciated the “pre-modern” character of South America, which, according to him, would draw out the idealized Polish peasant’s primordial essence. If Polish communities consisted of such primordial peasants, the implication was, they would be immune to assimilation and successful in pioneering settlements. Primordality, not modernity, was for him a prerequisite for “national colonization” in South America.

Streamlining the State Apparatus

In the 1920s, the principal objective of Polish colonial-minded activists straddling state and semi-state institutions was channeling emigration to South America, considered a superior destination because it offered settlers more wealth and a lower chance of assimilation into the surrounding population. Thanks to their influence, the early Polish emigration policies reflected the idea of using the economic potential of Polish settlers in South America, as well as the association between their wellbeing and Poland’s international status. The execution of an emigration program, however, required the streamlining of the state apparatus responsible for emigration. Already during the Paris Peace Conference an expert from the Bureau of Congress Works (*Biuro Prac Kongresowych*), Józef Kernbaum, suggested that Poland should use consular services, commercial treaties, and tariffs to encourage trade with “numerous Polish colonies in Europe, the United States, and Brazil.”⁶⁹ Moreover, statesmen felt that the game had been rigged against Poles in South America, where, contrary to the more industrialized United States, assistance from the mother country was seen as an important contributor to economic success. Kazimierz Warchałowski’s son Stanisław reminisced about Italian and German emigrants in Brazil

⁶⁸ Ibid., 133–53.

⁶⁹ See Józef Kernbaum, “W sprawie dostępu Polski do morza,” n.d., 10, 2/515/4/123, Biuro Prac Kongresowych, AAN.

mocking their Polish neighbors for their smaller plots of land and modest national institutions. He blamed the partitions for that unfavorable comparison, explaining that “not enjoying statehood, [Poles] did not have their diplomatic or consular representatives” from whom to seek help in cases of disease or unemployment.⁷⁰ In response to such opinions, from as early as December 1918 the Polish consular network was to include diplomatic posts in South America, which were envisioned as directing emigrant-generated capital to Poland, administering emigration and re-emigration, and obtaining raw materials. Rio de Janeiro and Curitiba made it to the list of the projected sites for Polish consulates, alongside Argentina’s Buenos Aires and Chile’s Valparaíso.⁷¹

Instead of pursuing the ambitious goals of encouraging commercial exchange with Poland’s “colonies,” however, the newly created diplomatic apparatus was initially occupied with mundane problems. In the 1920s Polish diplomats in South America dealt with, for example, the financial troubles of Polish oil drillers in Peru, many of whom had been contracted as Habsburg subjects and promised paychecks in the now-invalidated Austrian currency.⁷² They also expended much of their energy cultivating a good relationship with local journalists and other figures of influence to advance pro-Polish narratives in the Spanish- and Portuguese-language press, often in response to negative coverage radiating from powerful German circles.⁷³ Most importantly, of course, Poland’s diplomatic service was to act as an effective bridge between the country and its “colonies” in South America. One example of such mediation was trying to allow only legitimate travel agencies to publish their advertisements in local Polish newspapers;⁷⁴ another was

⁷⁰ Stanisław Warchałowski, *I poleciał w świat daleki...: wspomnienia z Brazylii, Polski i Peru*, ed. Jerzy Mazurek and Zuzanna Jakubowska (Warsaw: Biblioteka Iberyjska, 2009), 55.

⁷¹ “Notatka Wydziału Konsularnego MSZ w sprawie utworzenia sieci konsularnej,” December 1918, 236–39, doc. 117, PDD 1918.

⁷² “Lobito Oilfields Limited to the Polish Consulate General in London,” August 19, 1920, 2/504/5/62, Konsulat Generalny RP w Londynie, AAN.

⁷³ See, for example, 701/11/4, Polish Legation in Rio de Janeiro, JPIA.

⁷⁴ “Consulate in São Paulo to the Legation in Rio de Janeiro,” September 16, 1929, 701/11/5, Polish Legation in Rio de Janeiro, JPIA.

advertising the first major successful delivery of Polish coal to Rio de Janeiro in 1929 as the beginning of an auspicious relationship.⁷⁵ Many diplomatic posts in South America, however, suffered from logistical problems that inhibited such tasks into the 1930s. In response to an accusation of insufficient activity, the Polish legation in Buenos Aires listed practical issues it had to face amid increasing emigration to Argentina, ranging from staff shortages to its commercial attaché's need to perfect his Spanish.⁷⁶ Moreover, the diffusion of responsibility between different decision-making centers during the early period of democratic but unstable right-leaning governments did not aid the multitude of Polish consulates and legations in South America in serving as political and economic liaisons.

Józef Piłsudski's coup d'état of May 1926 marked the end of political instability and centrifugal trends. Instead, the self-appointed Marshal and his closest followers established the dictatorial Sanacja ("cleansing") military regime centered around his figure.⁷⁷ This "post-May camp" (*obóz pomajowy*), which consisted of soldiers from Piłsudski's former Polish Legions and controlled the Parliament through manipulation and force, depicted itself as the country's natural, morally superior elite.⁷⁸ According to its narrative, the legionaries had fought for the nation's independence and now wished to cleanse corruption and filth from public life.⁷⁹ Critical of political parties, the Sanacja initially ruled through the Nonpartisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government (*Bezpartyjny Blok Współpracy z Rządem*) and promoted the multiplication of civic associations ranging from labor unions to fire brigades, which it staffed with loyal followers and

⁷⁵ "Węgiel polski w Brazylii," November 27, 1929, 701/11/6, Polish Legation in Rio de Janeiro, JPIA.

⁷⁶ Polish Legation in Buenos Aires to the Consular Department on its economic activity, February 5, 1931, 2/322/3414, MSZ (1918-1939), AAN.

⁷⁷ Concerning the early Sanacja regime, see, for example, Andrzej Garlicki, *Od maja do Brześcia* (Czytelnik, 1981).

⁷⁸ Concerning the Sanacja's moral claims, see, for example, Eva Plach, *The Clash of Moral Nations: Cultural Politics in Piłsudski's Poland, 1926-1935* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006).

⁷⁹ Concerning the Sanacja's ideology, see, for example, Władysław Tadeusz Kulesza, *Sanacja a autorytaryzm i faszyzm: koncepcje ideowopolityczne obozu rządzącego w latach 1926-1935* (Warsaw: Instytut Nauk o Państwie i Prawie Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1979).

used as attractive means of acquiring new supporters.⁸⁰ The early Sanacja introduced a series of “progressive” reforms such as looser divorce laws and experimented with state intervention in the economy, but the presence of several conservative landowners and liberal economists in its ranks, as well as the desire to maintain good relations with the Catholic Church, undermined these reforms.⁸¹

At the end of the 1920s, the Sanacja shifted the weight of institutional responsibility for emigration policies in line with its tendency to streamline the government. In 1927, a new emigration law gave the Emigration Office more power but maintained that it should continue to cooperate with the foreign ministry in providing consular services to emigrants and in negotiating international migration treaties. The historian Edward Kołodziej has characterized the emigration law of 1927 as an important document that guaranteed freedom of movement to citizens and free-of-cost passports to the poorest applicants. Kołodziej pointed out that forcing all emigration to pass through Gdańsk or Gdynia, which the law rendered obligatory, generated additional budget revenue but also constrained market forces, raising the cost and lowering the quality of travel for many emigrants.⁸² Moreover, after 1927, the Sanacja perceived emigration as a factor that not only decreased the economic pressures in the provinces with high unemployment but also as one that spurred Poland’s maritime development.⁸³ In particular, the Polish government gradually took control of shipping companies operating in Poland. In the 1920s, it was a Danish-owned Baltic-American line that transported the largest number of emigrants from Poland across the Atlantic

⁸⁰ See, for example, Kamil Mrocza, “Polityka Józefa Piłsudskiego wobec parlamentu w pierwszych latach reżimu autorytarnego 1928-1930,” *e-Politikon*, no. 2 (2012): 1928–30.

⁸¹ Barbara Danowska-Prokop, “Stanowisko śląskiej sanacji wobec bezrobocia i dekonjunktury,” *Studia Ekonomiczne Akademii Ekonomicznej w Katowicach*, no. 18 (2001): 123–45; Edward Długajczyk, *Sanacja Śląska 1926-1939: zarys dziejów politycznych* (Katowice: Śląsk, 1983); Neal Pease, *Rome’s Most Faithful Daughter. The Catholic Church and Independent Poland* (Athens, 2009), 77–100.

⁸² Kołodziej, *Wychodźstwo zarobkowe z Polski 1918-1939*, 110–14.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 114; Mazurek, *Kraj a emigracja*, 148.

and operated the three signature liners of the period: “Polonia,” “Kościuszko,” and “Pułaski.” In March 1930, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce transformed this privately-owned Baltic-American line into the Polish Transatlantic Shipping Society, a joint-stock company, renamed Gdynia-America Shipping Lines (GAL) in 1934. By 1938, the Polish treasury claimed ownership of more than 98% of the GAL’s stocks.⁸⁴ Lastly, Warsaw also reformed the Emigration Syndicate to decrease the influence of foreign shipping companies in that institution.⁸⁵

Most importantly, the Sanacja became as concerned with the wellbeing of emigrants as with their contribution to the power of the state, which were considered two sides of the same coin. The overlapping of personnel between the Emigration Office and the PTK/PTE facilitated the adoption of policies prescribed in *Wychodźca* and *Kwartalnik*, including those concerning the channeling of emigration to Paraná, Santa Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul, and Misiones. In February 1927, the Emigration Office and the Brazilian state of São Paulo reached an agreement to channel the flow of agricultural workers from Poland to São Paulo. The former’s contemporary director, Stanisław Gawroński, described emigration to São Paulo as different from the emigration of settlers (*emigracja osadnicza*) but still hoped that departing agricultural workers would eventually be able to purchase their own land and concentrate in homogenous groups in their new homeland.⁸⁶ In the fall of 1928, a commission of the Emigration Office likewise proposed that emigrants with appropriate qualities could undertake “pioneer settlement” in South America, where land was

⁸⁴ Wanda Czerwińska in Roman Wapiński, ed., *Dzieje Gdyni* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1980), 44–46; Oskar Myszor, “Emigration Shipping Lines of Gdynia, 1924–1939,” in *East Central Europe in Exile Volume 1: Transatlantic Migrations*, ed. Anna Mazurkiewicz (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 157–75.

⁸⁵ “Nr 15. Notatka w sprawie Syndykatu Emigracyjnego,” August 1935, 2/322/9577, MSZ, AAN.

⁸⁶ Stanisław Gawroński, “Emigracja robotników rolnych do São Paulo w związku z zawartym 19 lutego 1927. roku układem,” *Kwartalnik Instytutu Naukowego do Badań Emigracji i Kolonizacji* 2 (1927): 5–40. Also see “Protokół Nr 6 z posiedzenia Komisji do ustalenia zasad kolonizacji i osadnictwa odbytego w Urzędzie Emigracyjnym d. 9 października 1928 r.,” n.d., 2, 2/322/9577, MSZ, AAN.

cheap and a “colonial” trade exchange could be established.⁸⁷ Moreover, one of the memoranda attached to that commission’s meeting protocols argued openly that Paraná, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul, and also areas more or less adjacent to these states, should be targeted as places where the Polish “element” could be concentrated.⁸⁸

As the channeling of emigration to the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland turned into an accepted aspect of the emigration program, the Polish state gave itself the right to synchronize the “economic and spiritual wellbeing” of emigrants with its own interests, which it derived from the financial assistance it rendered to emigrants upon departure.⁸⁹ In the words of the Emigration Office’s director in 1930, Bolesław Nakoniecznikoff, his institution made sure that emigration “did not contribute negatively to the balance of our economic life but provided new advantages for the whole nation.”⁹⁰ His underlining of the Polish state’s economic interests in respect to emigration was subject to fiery polemics. In 1929, Gustaw Załęcki distinguished between two fractions of emigration activists: those more concerned with the wellbeing of individual emigrants and those more concerned with emigration’s contribution to Poland’s economic and political power.⁹¹ The first “orientation” was, according to him, a “defeatist one, hiding behind the cloak of international humanitarianism.” The second, embodied in Nakoniecznikoff, represented “those who engaged the Nation with faith, demanding (...) an expansion of national forces to secure a powerful position for Poland and a proper place for the Polish race.”⁹² Moreover, while himself an activist interested in strengthening existing

⁸⁷ “Protokół Nr 1 z posiedzenia Komisji do ustalenia zasad kolonizacji i osadnictwa odbytego w Urzędzie Emigracyjnym d. 27 września 1928 r.,” n.d., 2/322/9577, MSZ, AAN.

⁸⁸ “Brazylia,” n.d., 2/322/9577, MSZ, AAN.

⁸⁹ “Protokół Nr 1 z posiedzenia Komisji do ustalenia zasad kolonizacji i osadnictwa odbytego w Urzędzie Emigracyjnym d. 27 września 1928 r.,” 2.

⁹⁰ “Zagadnienie emigracji w Polsce. Wywiad z dyrektorem Urzędu Emigracyjnego p. Bolesławem Nakoniecznikoffem,” *Wychodźca*, February 22, 1930, 2.

⁹¹ Gustaw Załęcki, *Dwie orientacje w polskiej polityce emigracyjnej* (Naukowy Instytut Emigracyjny, 1929), 42.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 5.

communities in South America, Załęcki did include Africa-focused colonial activists as belonging to the second fraction and disparaged politicians responsible for wasting Poland's chances to obtain former German colonies in 1920.⁹³ The split within the PTE, which occurred at the end of the decade, seems to have been related to the conflict between the two fractions, from which Załęcki and Nakoniecznikoff emerged victorious.⁹⁴

The growth of the "great-power orientation" (*orientacja mocarstwowa*) was reflected in new initiatives from the Emigration Office under the leadership of Nakoniecznikoff. One of them was the formation of the Emigration Syndicate (*Syndykat Emigracyjny*) as a joint-stock company to be financed from the sale of boarding passes, whose principal mission was to encourage prospective emigrants to make the move overseas. Its tasks included assisting them in choosing appropriate destinations, collecting necessary documents, planning intermediary hotel stays, and financing the journey.⁹⁵ At the same time, the Emigration Syndicate's unwritten intention was to promote Polish-owned firms such as the powerful Gdynia-America Line (GAL), which eventually authorized it to sell boarding passes on their behalf.⁹⁶ An expert from what would later turn into the GAL, however, pointed out a fundamental conflict of interests between the government and foreign shipping lines, which owned a minority of the Syndicate's stocks but contributed significant sums to its operations. According to him, the state's growing control over the selection of emigrants would result in the shipping lines no longer being able to compete for a number of their customers, forcing them to close many of their agencies in Poland.⁹⁷ As soon as it was created,

⁹³ Ibid., 21–22.

⁹⁴ "Od Redakcji," *Wychodźca*, January 18, 1930, 1–2.

⁹⁵ See Władysław Anusz, "Syndykat Emigracyjny," *Wychodźca*, June 1, 1930, 23. Also see Kicingier, *Polityka Emigracyjna II Rzeczypospolitej*, 32–33; Kołodziej, *Wychodźstwo zarobkowe z Polski 1918-1939*, 114–18; Łazor, "Polityka migracyjna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej – próba syntezy," 48–49; Mazurek, *Kraj a emigracja*, 147–54.

⁹⁶ See, for example, "The South American Line of the GAL to the Emigration Syndicate," January 22, 1936, 93/795/1.10/132, Gdynia-Ameryka Linie Żeglugowe S.A., APG (Gdynia).

⁹⁷ "Memorandum," 1932 1931, 93/795/1.10/129, Gdynia-Ameryka Linie Żeglugowe S.A., APG (Gdynia).

the Emigration Syndicate was tasked with a project conceived in the minds of colonial-minded emigration activists: it was to select appropriate emigrants to populate Polish settlements in Peru. It was this project of colonial pioneering that would influence the evolution of colonial ideas and emigration program for South America.

Colonial Pioneering in Peru

One of the greatest promoters of Polish emigration to Peru was Kazimierz Warchałowski. His relationship with other emigration activists, however, many of whom he accused of “mental incapacity” and “spiritual laziness,” was far from ideal. Warchałowski disparaged projects designed to discourage emigration by creating jobs in Poland as not forward-looking enough, whether they envisioned the passing of a constructive agrarian reform, public industrial works, or draining the swampy region of Polesie in the country’s east. Instead, Warchałowski suggested extending state tutelage over the millions of Polish emigrants living abroad, predicting that more emigration would occur given Poland’s annual average population growth of 450,000 and the crisis of the world order. In fact, it was the failure of the world order that he blamed for Poland’s “colonial” prerogatives, suggesting that World War I had tipped the global system of supply and demand off balance, leading to a shortage of capital in agrarian Poland and to the sale of the country’s wealth to foreign companies. The alternative to that cycle was, according to him, the generation of capital overseas, in the “colonies,” and its transfer to the home country through commercial exchange.⁹⁸ However, unlike Załęcki and Zarychta, both of whom emphasized the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland as the ideal location for “colonies,” Warchałowski advocated for the channeling of emigration to locations where Poles had not yet settled.

⁹⁸ Kazimierz Warchałowski, “Handwritten notes on emigration and colonial policies,” n.d., 2/428/3.1/60, Akta Kazimierza i Janiny Warchałowskich, AAN.

In the mid-1920s, Warchałowski became interested in colonial pioneering in Peru after the idea had been pitched in diplomatic circles. In 1924, Poland's delegate to Brazil, Mikołaj Jurystowski, paid a courtesy visit to the administration of President Augusto B. Leguía in Lima. Since Leguía needed foreign settlers to execute the ambitious project of populating and modernizing his country's interior, the Peruvian president floated the topic of channeling emigration from Poland to Peru in a conversation with Jurystowski. Nevertheless, given Jurystowski's limited enthusiasm, the project remained untouched until the following year. In 1925, Warchałowski, briefly occupying a high position at the Emigration Office at the time, visited Peru and held his own talks with Leguía's cabinet, which excited him so much that he fully endorsed Peru as a potential target for Poland's "national colonization."⁹⁹ Also in 1925, the first mentions of Peru appeared in *Wychodźca*, advertising the country as a potential trade partner and emigration outlet.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, neither the Peruvian consulate in Warsaw nor the Emigration Office was enthusiastic about channeling emigration to Peru. Instead, emigration officials accused Warchałowski of provoking a "Peruvian fever" and considered the Peruvian climate inappropriate for even the strongest emigrants from Poland.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, despite this temporary admonition from the government, Warchałowski persuaded a group of wealthy businessmen and landowners from Galicia to create the "Polish-American Corporation for Land Settlement" (*Polsko-Amerykański Syndykat Kolonizacyjny*) in late 1926 with the aim of negotiating and financing settlement in Peru. Because of disagreements with his partners over the pace of accumulating capital, however, Warchałowski left the Polish-American Corporation and

⁹⁹ See Jerzy Mazurek, *Piórem i czynem: Kazimierz Warchałowski (1872-1943) - pionier osadnictwa polskiego w Brazylii i Peru* (Warsaw: Biblioteka Iberyjska, 2013), 208–9.

¹⁰⁰ Tomasz Oxiński, "Widoki emigracji do Peru," *Wychodźca*, March 22, 1925, 6; Tomasz Oxiński, "Złotodajne Peru," *Wychodźca*, August 23, 1925, 10–13.

¹⁰¹ "W sprawie emigracji do Peru," *Wychodźca*, November 13, 1927, 1–2.

used his connections in the government to finance his own negotiations with Leguía's administration in Lima.¹⁰²

His efforts proved to be successful. On May 20, 1927, the Peruvian government granted Warchałowski a territorial concession of 3500 sq. km in the department of Loreto, in the region of Montaña, of which 500 sq. km would immediately become his property as reimbursement for the cost of transporting colonists. The rest of the land would become his after he successfully managed to settle a total of 850 families in the years 1929–1931. Warchałowski was responsible for preparing the concession in terms of infrastructure (mostly roads) and for selling land plots to settlers. The area allotted to the Polish activist consisted of two separate parts located along the Ucayali River, a tributary of the Amazon, to the east of the Andes, between the 8th and 11th latitudes. It was a tropical rainforest inhabited mostly by the indigenous people, whose main staples included coffee, cotton, yuca, beans, rice, and fruits, while its most lucrative natural resource was timber. One year after Warchałowski's success in Lima, the Polish-American Corporation, which continued to function despite its founder's departure, reached a similar agreement with Lima (April 1928). The partnership received 10,000 sq. km along the Ucayali River, in an area located directly south of the lower part of Warchałowski's concession, in the forks of the Tambo and Urubamba Rivers (Figure 7).¹⁰³ Conducting negotiations in less haste than Warchałowski, the Polish-American Corporation obtained areas less prone to inundations and better for farming than those that Warchałowski had received. Moreover, it was Lima that was to bear the cost of transporting colonists from Poland to the settlement between the Tambo and

¹⁰² See Mazurek, *Piórem i czynem*, 215–18.

¹⁰³ Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, "Opis polskich terenów kolonizacyjnych w Peru," *Kwartalnik Naukowego Instytutu Emigracyjnego i Kolonialnego* 4, no. 3–4 (1929): 596–605.

Urubamba.¹⁰⁴

The two concessions granted to Polish entities precipitated the dispatching of an exploratory expedition, which was to examine their environment, climate, and soil. This mission, which left Warsaw in January 1928, included interwar Poland's leading colonial activists: Warchałowski, Mieczysław Lepecki, Michał Pankiewicz, and Apoloniusz Zarychta (Figure 6).¹⁰⁵

After traveling via Paris, Lisbon, Manaus, and Iquitos, the Poles arrived in Montaña at the



Figure 6. The Polish scientific expedition to Peru. Sitting from left to right: Mieczysław Lepecki, Michał Pankiewicz, Feliks Gadowski (an engineer), Apoloniusz Zarychta. Source: NAC 1-N-989-2.

beginning of spring, where they examined the Ucayali concessions from mid-March to mid-May. In September, after returning to Poland, the participants published a report in which they deemed the conditions in the region generally satisfactory for settlement. In particular, in an effort to

turn them into agents of the state, they considered the isolation of existing human settlements as an advantage that would prevent Polish settlers from losing their national identity. At the same time, Warchałowski exaggerated the quality of his concession in his follow-up publications and concealed the risk of river flooding from the public.¹⁰⁶ The findings of the expedition provoked an avalanche of critical responses in the press, which came from average analysts and fellow colonial activists. Pankiewicz and Lepecki both distanced themselves from the Peruvian projects, with the

¹⁰⁴ Maria Bochdan-Niedenthal, *Ucayali: raj czy piekło nad Amazonką* (Warsaw: Dom Książki Polskiej, 1935), 128; Lepecki, "Opis polskich terenów kolonizacyjnych w Peru," 596–605.

¹⁰⁵ Pankiewicz, "Biebrza - Amazonka - Wisła. Tom II," 161; "Przed wyjazdem ekspedycji do Peru," *Wychodźca*, January 1, 1928, 1–2.

¹⁰⁶ See Mazurek, *Piórem i czynem*, 227–38.

former critical of the Polish-American Corporation's conduct and the latter of Warchałowski's concession.¹⁰⁷

Cumaría was the name of the area selected for settlement from the first concession. In April 1929, hoping for state subsidies and loans, Warchałowski created a cooperative called "Kolonja Polska" to partly administer the settlement project.¹⁰⁸ In two deals highly beneficial to Warchałowski, the cooperative took over the responsibility to prepare the settlement's infrastructure and to recruit colonists, which would become its members. Moreover, Warchałowski was appointed the first director of Cumaría. In cooperation with the Emigration Syndicate and with permission from the Emigration Office, recruitment was launched in the fall of 1929 and the British Booth Line was selected to transport the colonists to Manaus, Brazil. Still, the Polish government was undecided concerning Polish emigration to Peru. In a tellingly vague statement, a state emigration expert claimed that establishing settlements in areas around the equator in Peru was a good idea, given their natural wealth, as long as it was done carefully.¹⁰⁹ Consequently, while the Emigration Office issued free passports and provided useful information to prospective emigrants, its agencies failed to prevent con artists from taking advantage of them. Moreover, despite their nominal role as state commissioners to "Kolonja Polska," Pankiewicz and Zarychta failed to intervene in the cooperative's financial mismanagement.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Jules Laroche, "Note relative à l'émigration polonaise au Pérou," May 5, 1931, 106CPCOM/371, Série Z-Europe (Pologne), Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP; Michał Pankiewicz, "Złote żniwo naganiaczy peruwiańskich," *Wychodźca*, April 14, 1929, 1–2.

¹⁰⁸ Stanisław Malessa, "Spółdzielnia osadnicza 'Kolonja Polska,'" *Wychodźca*, April 21, 1929, 3–4.

¹⁰⁹ "Protokół Nr 8 z posiedzenia Komisji do ustalenia zasad kolonizacji i osadnictwa odbytego w Urzędzie Emigracyjnym d. 11 października 1928 r.," n.d., 8, 2/322/9577, MSZ, AAN.

¹¹⁰ See Mazurek, *Piórem i czynem*, 239–48.

In April 1930, the first batch of colonists left Poland for Belém do Pará, Brazil, from where they would continue to Cumaria via Manaus (Figure 8).¹¹¹ Among them was Maria Bochdan-Niedenthal, the author of a detailed account of the Peruvian project, in which she participated with

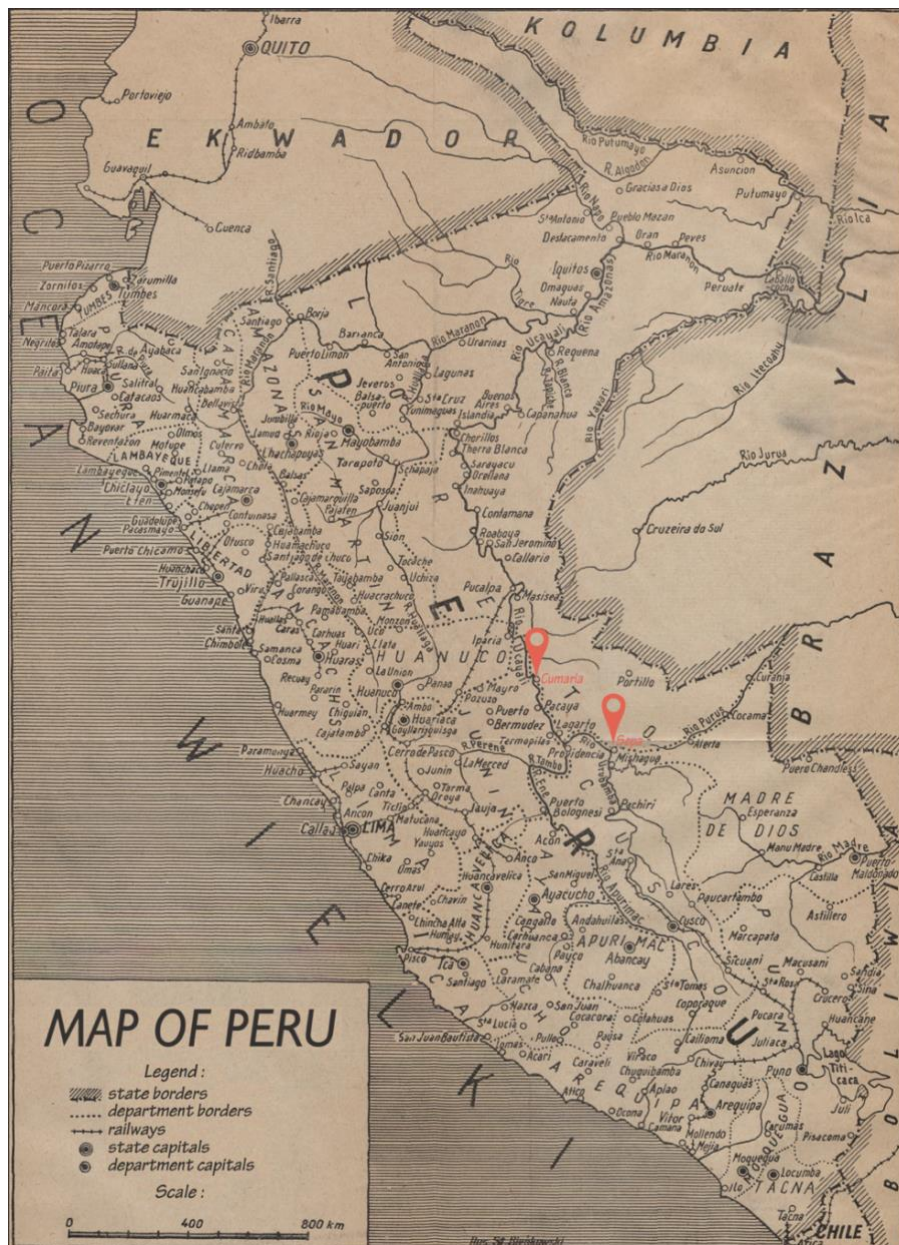


Figure 7. Map of Peru showing the approximate location of Cumaria and Sepa. Edited from: Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, *Opis polskich terenów kolonizacyjnych w Peru* (Warsaw: Naukowy Instytut Emigracyjny, 1930). Copyright of the edited version: Piotr Puchalski.

concession due to his private business initiatives and the cession of many other liabilities to

her husband, Kazimierz. Upon arriving in Cumaria, she was surprised to find out that its climate was quite moderate: the temperature at night was only 20°C.¹¹² This would be one of few positive remarks Bochdan-Niedenthal made about the settlement, however, whose leader she accused of financial malfeasance. In fact, Stanisław Warchałowski admitted that logistical chaos

¹¹¹ "Informacje dla wyjeżdżających do Peru," *Wychodźca*, April 13, 1930, 15.

¹¹² Bochdan-Niedenthal, *Ucayali: raj czy piekło nad Amazonką*, 37.



Figure 8. Polish colonists departing for Peru (1930). It was not only farmers who left Poland for a better life in Peru but also artisans and intelligentsia. Source: NAC: 1-Z-974.

“Kolonia Polska.” As a result of that chaos, another party of settlers dispatched from Warsaw became stranded in Iquitos without money for further travel, which gave Kazimierz Warchałowski a justification to spend money

that Maria’s husband,

Kazimierz Niedenthal, had entrusted to him for a different purpose. Niedenthal’s funds was also used to finance Warchałowski’s investment in a modern wood mill, with which he exploited local cedar and mahogany forests.¹¹³ Waław Chrostowski, the director of “Kolonia Polska” in Peru, claimed that Warchałowski was only present in Cumaria for seventy-seven days between May 24, 1930 and March 21, 1931 because of his responsibilities related to the wood mill. As a result, Cumaria had been so unprepared for settlement that a group of colonists needed to clear a pathway in the rainforest in order to access a land plot where they could start farming. Moreover, Warchałowski failed to register the “Kolonia Polska” as a legal entity in Lima and technically remained the only concessionary, which made the cooperative’s functioning difficult.¹¹⁴

In addition to Warchałowski’s privateering and disorganization, Cumaria’s other problems included the Emigration Syndicate’s poor selection of colonists, whose ranks included fewer farmers than intellectuals, former convicts, and artisans, and many of whom could hardly adapt to

¹¹³ Warchałowski, *I poleciał w świat daleki...*, 213–14.

¹¹⁴ Waław Chrostowski, “Błędy organizacyjne i szkodliwa działalność Kolonii Polskiej,” February 5, 1931, 2/2672/1/3, Archiwum Rodziny Niedenthali.

the tropical climate and pioneer lifestyle.¹¹⁵ Prefacing a report from Father Franciszek Sokół, widely considered the most conscientious colonist at Cumaría, the Catholic weekly *Gazeta Świąteczna* noted the malevolence of a number of trouble-makers (*warchoły*) who eventually fled the settlement.¹¹⁶ Indeed, Stanisław Grabowski, Poland's delegate in Rio de Janeiro, reported in March 1931 that demoralized groups of colonists scattered along the Peruvian border and were attempting to cross into Brazil.¹¹⁷ Sokół claimed that at least one party of refugees, mostly young men without prior farming experience, escaped from Cumaría because they were disappointed at the lack of opportunity to quickly enrich themselves.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, it seems that Warchałowski's conduct, too, provoked at least some of the escapes. According to one fugitive's account, the colonists working at Warchałowski's wood mill got paid in mandioca and black beans (*feijão*), rather than cash, and decided to embark on a several-months-long odyssey, which involved a voyage to Iquitos and farther into Brazil.¹¹⁹ Their journey could be deadly: after arriving in Manaus, one of the escapees died from exhaustion in a local hospital.¹²⁰ Moreover, the escapees from Cumaría provoked an international scandal when the Brazilian government, undergoing an anti-communist turn, accused them of being Bolsheviks and introduced a temporary prohibition against Poles navigating transnational rivers.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ Bochdan-Niedenthal, *Ucayali: raj czy piekło nad Amazonką*, 159; Michał Jarnecki, "Peruwiańska porażka i próba jej naprawy. Wokół polskich międzywojennych koncepcji emigracyjnych i kolonialnych," *Sprawy Narodowościowe* 0, no. 44 (2014): 109.

¹¹⁶ Franciszek Sokół, "Prawda o Peru (I)," *Gazeta Świąteczna*, no. 2646 (October 18, 1931): 4.

¹¹⁷ Tadeusz Grabowski, "Raport posła w Rio de Janeiro na temat sytuacji imigrantów polskich," March 12, 1931, 183–86, doc. 66, PDD 1931.

¹¹⁸ "Franciszek Sokół to Michał Pankiewicz," May 26, 1931, 2/428/3.5/105, Akta Kazimierza i Janiny Warchałowskich, AAN.

¹¹⁹ "Protokół spisany na skutek zeznania Grochala Jana, b. kolonisty na kolonii Cumaría na Ucayali /w Peru/," March 6, 1931, 2/322/3637, MSZ, AAN.

¹²⁰ "Tadeusz Grabowski to Władysław Mazurkiewicz," March 7, 1931, 2/322/3637, MSZ, AAN.

¹²¹ "Tadeusz Grabowski to the Emigration Office," March 12, 1931, 2/322/3637, MSZ, AAN.



Figure 9. The Ucayali. The width of the river did not always allow large ships to enter. Source: Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, *Opis polskich terenów kolonizacyjnych w Peru* (Warsaw: Naukowy Instytut Emigracyjny, 1930).

The Polish-American Corporation's settlement, Sepa (or Cepa), located in the much more southern area on the Urubamba River, a tributary of the Ucayali, did not fare much better, since, like Cumaria, it was distant from inhabited spaces. In mid-1929, Michał Gieysztor, Sepa's soon-to-be director, took forty-eight days to travel from Lima to Montaña, traversing several hundred kilometers of mountainous terrain only to proceed by automobile and ship. The penultimate part of his ordeal involved using a motor boat to navigate the Ucayali River from the village called Masissa into the narrower Urubamba River,

during which the average temperature was 36°C in the shade and 25°C at night (Figure 9).¹²²

Gieysztor described the concession granted to the Polish-American Corporation as follows:

"Woods and woods, incessantly. Only sporadically one finds along the bank [of the Urubamba] cultivated plots of corn, yuca, bananas, and cotton. Almost all such farms are 2-6 hectares, and each consists of two or three shacks supported by tall timbers. The yards in front of these houses are usually elegantly cleared, but one rarely sees any gardens with flowers – unless the owner is more intelligent and has daughters at marriageable age. Cows walk around freely in the forest and pastures; pigs, hens, and ducks gather right next to the house, searching for a chiller spot."¹²³

¹²² Michał Gieysztor, *Peru, Polacy na szlakach świata* (Warsaw: Rój, 1933), 24.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 26–27.

At the endpoint of the journey, Gieysztor claimed that the average temperature became lower, the water of the river refreshing, and mosquitoes less annoying. Sepa itself made a rather favorable impression on him, with several houses already standing and one small plot farmed.¹²⁴

By July 1930, the Polish-American Corporation was supposed to send fifty families of colonists to the concession.¹²⁵ No emigrants proper ever arrived in Sepa, however. Instead, two Polish engineers, one of them being Gieysztor, and a group of Polish settlers from Paraná had been commissioned to measure the land, divide it into plots, and build more houses in the spring of 1930.¹²⁶ In the meantime, however, apparently as a result of a political entanglement that involved Prime Minister Kazimierz Bartel, the Emigration Office refused to grant the Polish-American Corporation permission to recruit settlers and Poland's Development Bank (*Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego*, or BGK) declined its loan request.¹²⁷ In order to fulfill the promise made to the Peruvian government to import a certain number of families from Poland, the Polish-American Corporation used the funds received for that purpose from the Peruvian government to quickly install several not-very-useful artisans instead of farmers at Sepa. Making things worse, the partnership enticed them with unrealistically high salaries "guaranteed" in contracts stamped with what appeared to be the seal of the Emigration Office. Upon discovering the scheme, the workers immediately left Sepa before any settlement could take place.¹²⁸ Moreover, entrepreneurs from the Polish-American Corporation borrowed considerable sums of money from the Peruvians, which, in turn, allowed one local administrator, Enrique Urresti, to seize control over the settlement.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Ibid., 30–32.

¹²⁵ "Polsko-Amerykański Syndykat Kolonizacyjny," *Wychodźca*, June 1, 1930, 57.

¹²⁶ See Jarnecki, "Peruwiańska porażka i próba jej naprawy," 111–12.

¹²⁷ Zofia Żelska-Mrozowicka, "'Niech ryby zaśpiewają o Ucayali!'" *Dzieje polskich obszarów kolonialnych w Peru*," *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, November 18, 1936, 3.

¹²⁸ Bochdan-Niedenthal, *Ucayali: raj czy piekło nad Amazonką*, 127.

¹²⁹ See Jarnecki, "Peruwiańska porażka i próba jej naprawy," 120–21.

When Bochdan-Niedenthal traveled from Cumaría to watch coffee and corn harvests in Sepa, the assiduousness of hired American Indians working under Urresti impressed her greatly. She regretted that such good work started so late, and that Sepa was slipping out of Polish hands.¹³⁰

While the Emigration Office was not directly implicated in producing falsified contracts, a number of Polish officials had conflicted interests, especially the Polish consul in Lima, Witold Szyszło, a financially involved intermediary for the Polish-American Corporation. In a letter to Gieysztor from 1929, Szyszło criticized the Polish government for its reluctance to endorse the concession granted to the partnership, writing that Peru would not allot any better areas to any concessionaries not willing to invest considerable sums.¹³¹ Still, facing crises in both Cumaría and Sepa, other Polish officials tried hard to mitigate the negative impact of the failing settlements. One of them was the colonial activist Michał Pankiewicz, emigration attaché for South America at the time, dispatched to Peru in an act of emergency. Recognizing the mistakes committed in both settlements, Pankiewicz made efforts to move the refugees to Poland's other "colonies" in South America.¹³² By 1935, all colonists had indeed been moved from Peru to other places in South America, in particular to Paraná and to a new pioneer settlement in Espírito Santo.¹³³ Meanwhile, however, the attaché advised colonists not to flee to Iquitos, where they would not find work, and to instead persevere in Cumaría, where their condition was still supposedly better than that of thousands of other Poles scattered throughout South America during the global economic crisis.¹³⁴

Most sources accuse the leaders of the private partnerships for the spectacular collapse of Cumaría and Sepa while allowing the possibility of Warchałowski's good intentions. Maria

¹³⁰ Bochdan-Niedenthal, *Ucayali: raj czy piekło nad Amazonką*, 126–27.

¹³¹ "Witold Szyszło to Michał Gieysztor," August 24, 1939, 2/364/2/2.1/20, Akta Michała Gieyszтора, AAN.

¹³² See Jarnecki, "Peruwiańska porażka i próba jej naprawy," 114, 118.

¹³³ Teodor Cybulski, "Notatka dla Pana Naczelnika Wydz. E.I. dr. Zarychty," August 1935, 2, 2/322/9577, MSZ, AAN.

¹³⁴ "Michał Pankiewicz to Kazimierz Niedenthal," February 5, 1931, 2/2672/1/4, Archiwum Rodziny Niedenthali.

Bochdan-Niedenthal argued that it was the Polish government that was ultimately to blame for not taking enough control over both the schemes of “people without scruples” and “fantastical and miscalculated plans” sometimes born in “good-natured [*pocziwy*] hearts.” In the future, careful and long-term planning should replace carelessness, she strongly suggested.¹³⁵ Whereas, according to her, “Kolonja Polska” had failed because it was located on a swampy terrain unfit for farming or trade, Sepa was located in an excellent area and had collapsed because of the Polish-American Corporation’s dishonest dealings.¹³⁶ Likewise, Franciszek Sokół blamed the government for not properly examining the concessions and called out the cavalier attitude of the “Kolonja Polska” and Polish-American Corporation alike.¹³⁷ In its own hardly-unbiased report, the administration of “Kolonja Polska” attributed most of the responsibility to Warchałowski’s private interests and accused him of having exaggerated the wonders of Peru in his publications.¹³⁸ In turn, Warchałowski blamed the overly protective attitude of the Emigration Office for the inability to carry out settlement in Peru, suggesting that it had sabotaged his negotiations with the BGK.¹³⁹

Despite the harsh and justified criticism, many participants in what they described as mere “experiments” still saw promise in colonial pioneering in South America. Warchałowski defended his project, arguing that less inhabited areas such as Cumaria should be selected again. According to him, neither a weak nor a strong national “element” was able to dominate where others had already established agricultural or industrial production, which was why Germans had failed to

¹³⁵ Bochdan-Niedenthal, *Ucayali: raj czy piekło nad Amazonką*, 137.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹³⁷ Sokół, “Prawda o Peru (I),” 4.

¹³⁸ Aleksander Kurowski, “Upadłość Spółdzielni Osadniczej ‘Kolonja Polska’ w Warszawie. O powodach załamania się polskiej kolonizacji w Peru nad rzeką Ucayali,” June 1932, 2/428/3.5/105, Akta Kazimierza i Janiny Warchałowskich, AAN.

¹³⁹ Kazimierz Warchałowski, “Zagadnienia kolonizacyjne. /Artykuł dyskusyjny - odpowiedź na artykuły w Nr 6-7 czerwiec-lipiec 1933 r. mies. ‘Polacy Zagranicą,’” February 22, 1934, 8, 2/428/3.1/61, Akta Kazimierza i Janiny Warchałowskich, AAN.

push Poles out of the Reich's eastern borderlands before World War I.¹⁴⁰ It seems that Warchałowski continued to use the language of state interests, partly to fulfill his own personal economic agenda, but also out of a strong conviction that “colonial pioneering” was also in Poland's interest. Likewise, Gieysztor refrained from pointing fingers at particular culprits for the break-down of his settlement and believed that wealthy settlers could still settle in Peru, where their “colonies” would become important plantations of crucial staples and transfer points for finished industrial products from Poland.¹⁴¹ Bochdan-Niedenthal made several positive remarks regarding Peru, too, appreciating that Szymoński, the Polish doctor, and Sokół, the Polish priest, had become popular figures in the entire local community, while other European spiritual leaders did not always carry out their activities with integrity. Religion was, she implied, necessary for raising the morality in neighboring settlements, where men fathered children with their daughters and mothers-in-law. Morality, in turn, determined where a group stood in the imaginary hierarchy of civilization.¹⁴²

Other colonists played on contemporary ideas of “blackness” and “whiteness” to negotiate their position in the imagined racial hierarchy. In 1933, Arkady Fiedler (1894–1985) (Figure 10), a butterfly expert and aspiring writer, used his private funds to travel to Montaña – apparently without any connection to the Polish settlements but with the promise of honorariums from the newspaper *Gazeta Polska*.¹⁴³ During his stay on the Ucayali, Fiedler underlined that locals perceived him as a culturally superior white man. In this context, he narrated the story of women who wished to become his “compañeras” (*kompaniery*), traveling housewives and casual sexual

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 10–11.

¹⁴¹ Michał Gieysztor, “Kilka słów prawdy o możliwościach emigracji polskiej do Peru,” 1931, 18–19, 2/364/2/2.1/22, Akta Michała Gieyszтора, AAN.

¹⁴² Bochdan-Niedenthal, *Ucayali: raj czy piekło nad Amazonką*, 48.

¹⁴³ Arkady Fiedler, *Wiek męski - zwycięski* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1983), 86–89.

partners.¹⁴⁴ At the same time, not all Polish attitudes toward non-whites involved condescension and the desire to write themselves into the club of European powers. Traveling along the Ucayali,



Figure 10. Arkady Fiedler.
Source: NAC 1-K-1475.

Stanisław Warchałowski commended American Indians for their perseverance and hunting skills, although expressed disgust for their certain culinary customs, for example eating cockroaches.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, Warchałowski and other Poles in Cumaría risked their lives to protect an American Indian runaway, dispatching an armed expedition to protect the man from his previous master.¹⁴⁶ In another instance, Warchałowski mentioned that a “black Pole” named Gumercindo accompanied his travelling party in Brazil. Gumercindo “impressed everyone during the journey” because, despite being black, he preferred to speak Polish rather than Portuguese. Still, for many Poles, the interior of South America was “wastelands, where power dictated the rules, and where nobody asked you about your past,” especially not whether your female companion was your wife.¹⁴⁷ It was largely seen as a *tabula rasa*, a projection screens for Polish preconceptions, fantasies, and colonial projects.

By the mid-1930s, Lima had nullified all concessions granted to the Poles, with over a hundred colonists who had been exported to Peru either returning to Poland or moving to other locations in South America.¹⁴⁸ The fiasco created considerable embarrassment in Poland, with officials speaking discreetly about the “extremely unhappy” affair, as the French ambassador in

¹⁴⁴ Arkady Fiedler, *Ryby śpiewają w Ukajali* (Warsaw: Rój, 1937), 62–68.

¹⁴⁵ Warchałowski, *I poleciał w świat daleki...*, 182–83.

¹⁴⁶ Bochdan-Niedenthal, *Ucayali: raj czy piekło nad Amazonką*, 42; Warchałowski, *I poleciał w świat daleki...*, 210–11.

¹⁴⁷ Warchałowski, *I poleciał w świat daleki...*, 158.

¹⁴⁸ Jarnecki, “Peruwiańska porażka i próba jej naprawy,” 113–21; Mazurek, *Piórem i czynem*, 268–69.

Warsaw, Jules Laroche, noted in May 1931.¹⁴⁹ In effect, the Polish government would not heed any future requests from the “Polish-American Corporation,” which called for reclaiming the concession along the Ucayali.¹⁵⁰ In December 1936, it was announced that Warsaw would not help finance the purchase of a concession that had been initially granted for free and that it considered transporting 3,000 families to the area in the next seven years highly unrealistic.¹⁵¹ Helping Polish decision-makers learn to practice extreme caution toward pioneering new areas in South America already in the early 1930s was another settlement project that took place in parallel to the struggles in Peru.

Colonial Pioneering in Espírito Santo

In July 1929, an expert named Koppens outlined Poland’s emigration program for South America in remarks made to district administrators of the Stanisławów voivodeship. According to him, the Polish government supported existing, prosperous clusters of emigrants. In addition, however, it also backed initiatives aiming to establish new settlements where appropriate conditions existed. In particular, the Emigration Office authorized the Colonial Society (*Towarzystwo Kolonizacyjne*, or TK) to carry out the “technical-executive” aspect of the “settlement action” (*akcja osadnicza*) in the Brazilian state of Espírito Santo. The TK selected and purchased land in Espírito Santo, which it was to prepare for the arrival of colonists. Moreover, according to Koppens, the Polish state planned to “supplement” existing settlements in the other states: Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul, and Santa Catarina. In order to turn emigrants into agents of the

¹⁴⁹ Laroche, “Note relative à l’émigration polonaise au Pérou,” 7.

¹⁵⁰ Żelska-Mrozowicka, “‘Niech ryby zaśpiewają o Ucayali!’ Dzieje polskich obszarów kolonialnych w Peru,” 4; “Program pracy przy założeniu ośrodka pionierskiego gospodarczo-handlowego w Peru,” June 1937, I.302.4.2197, Generalny Inspektorat Sił Zbrojnych, CAW WBH.

¹⁵¹ Wiktor Drymmer, “Nr. E.I.278/18/47,” December 24, 1936, I.302.4.143, Generalny Inspektorat Sił Zbrojnych, CAW WBH.

Polish state, agricultural experts would be sent overseas, consular agencies expanded, and a central financial institution, perhaps an Emigration Division of the Agricultural Bank (*Bank Rolny*), would be established.¹⁵²

The TK was created on March 26, 1926 based on an agreement signed with the Polish government, in particular with the Ministry of Labor and Social Assistance. Its function was to



Figure 11. Map of Brazil showing the approximate location of Águia Branca. Edited from: Hydrographic Office of the U.S. Navy (Public Domain). Copyright of the edited version: Piotr Puchalski.

plan and carry out overseas settlements in cooperation with the state.¹⁵³ One prominent founder and sponsor of the society was Józef Targowski, a conservative ally of the Sanacja at the time.¹⁵⁴ In line with most emigration activists, Targowski supported channeled emigration to the less

densely populated French possessions in northern Africa (especially Tunisia), to South America, and to Canada, all spaces where Polish emigrants could acquire large swaths of land, resulting in

¹⁵² "Załączniki do protokołu zjazdu starostów, odbytego w dniu 13 lipca 1929 r. Załącznik nr 4. Uwagi dra Koppensa, Naczelnika Wydziału Samorządowego o ruchu emigracyjnym w Polsce ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Województwa Stanisławowskiego," July 13, 1929, 13–14, 2/1186/16, Urząd Wojewódzki w Stanisławowie, AAN.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ "Pro Memoria. Działalność Towarzystwa Kolonizacyjnego," May 18, 1932, 2/8/6/72-1, Akta Grupowe 1932-1939, Prezydium Rady Ministrów w Warszawie, AAN.

their economic wellbeing, moral self-fulfillment, and ability to serve as the Polish state's agents.¹⁵⁵ At the same, given the pioneering nature of these territories, Targowski argued that a public institution such as his was required for their successful installment.¹⁵⁶ By the late 1920s, abandoning the idea of north Africa or Canada, Targowski had decided to establish pioneer settlements in South America.

In October 1927, the Ministry of Labor and Social Assistance permitted the TK to recruit 1,800 families for settlement in the Brazilian state of Espírito Santo.¹⁵⁷ One year later, an agreement was reached with Espírito Santo, according to which the Brazilian state leased the Polish partnership 500 sq. km in a territorial concession.¹⁵⁸ In effect, the TK established the settlement called Águia Branca (Figure 11), which continues to exist under this name to this day. While it is not clear what the process of selecting the emigrants in Poland looked like and where exactly they came from, the settlement consisted mostly of Polish-Catholic farming families with children, who were unable to purchase land in Poland, as well as of a couple of members of the intelligentsia (Figure 12). The first transport of colonists to Águia Branca arrived in Brazil in September 1929 and received a warm welcome from the local Polish community in Rio de Janeiro, including the Polish chargé d'affaires.¹⁵⁹ Another transport, counting 160 settlers, came in October 1929.¹⁶⁰ By

¹⁵⁵ Józef Targowski, *Biali i kolorowi* (Warsaw: M. Arcta, 1925); Józef Targowski, *Przyczynek do programu osadniczej emigracji polskiej* (Warsaw: Towarzystwo Kolonizacyjne, 1927), 8.

¹⁵⁶ Targowski, *Przyczynek do programu osadniczej emigracji polskiej*, 11–16.

¹⁵⁷ Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, *Opis stanu Espírito Santo ze specjalnym uwzględnieniem terenów, na których odbywa się kolonizacja polska* (Warsaw: Liga Morska i Kolonialna, 1931), 86.

¹⁵⁸ "Copia acta protocolar do contracto de colonização assignado entre o governo do estado de Espírito Santo e a Sociedade de Colonização em Varsovia Limitada Realizado em 6 de Outubro de 1928 nesta capital," February 21, 1933, 2/428/3.1/74, Akta Kazimierza i Janiny Warchałowskich, AAN; Michał Pankiewicz, "Espírito Santo," *Wychodźca*, March 10, 1929, 1–3.

¹⁵⁹ "Telegram to the Polish Telegraphic Agency in Warsaw," September 19, 1929, 701/11/6, Polish Legation in Rio de Janeiro, JPIA.

¹⁶⁰ "Telegram to the Polish Telegraphic Agency in Warsaw," October 15, 1929, 701/11/6, Polish Legation in Rio de Janeiro, JPIA.

September 1930, according to one source, 495 colonists had settled in Águia Branca.¹⁶¹ By the end of the following year, Águia Branca had received twelve parties of colonists, which added to a total of 913 people. Because of several departures, however, only 315 people, or 63 families, lived there in May 1932, each occupying an average plot of 0.25 sq. km, of which a fifth was



Figure 12. Transport of colonists to Águia Branca (September 1929). As in the case of Peru, not all of these people had farming experience. Source: AAN 2/88/21/87.

cultivated.¹⁶² Unfortunately, unlike in the case of the less populous Cumaria and Sepa, there are fewer extant sources describing the story of Águia Branca, although a photo album from the settlement has survived in Warsaw archives.¹⁶³

In 1931, Mieczysław Lepecki

published a lengthy description of Espírito Santo's history, geography, political situation, economy, and culture, paying special attention to the areas where the settlement was forming. According to him, the Polish concession was located in the northern, forested and hilly part of Espírito Santo, between the tributaries of the Doce and São Mateus Rivers, while Águia Branca itself lay where the São José River connected to another stream. Lepecki described the climate as moderate, comparable to that of Paraná, but did not paint the concession as a paradise, pointing out, for example, that four Polish children had already died of local diseases.¹⁶⁴ Despite being a good location for farming and trade, however, Águia Branca was quite distant (about 750 km) from the nearest Polish diplomatic post in Rio de Janeiro, making the cash-stripped legation unable

¹⁶¹ Lepecki, *Opis stanu Espírito Santo*, 83.

¹⁶² "Pro Memoria. Działalność Towarzystwa Kolonizacyjnego."

¹⁶³ "Photo album from Águia Branca," 1930 1929, 2/88/21/87, Towarzystwo Kolonizacyjne w Warszawie, AAN.

¹⁶⁴ Lepecki, *Opis stanu Espírito Santo*, 84–85.

to send any of its employees to visit the settlement at least until February 1931. Instead, Walerian Koszarowski, the TK's representative, provided the Polish government with one of the first reports



Figure 13. Administrators of *Águia Branca*, with Mieczysław Lepecki sitting on the left. Source: AAN 2/88/21/87.

from the settlement, which the Polish delegate in Rio, Tadeusz Grabowski, believed to be credible.¹⁶⁵

At the beginning of 1931, Koszarowski reported that *Águia Branca*'s situation was optimal: the terrain had been cleared and wooden barracks built alongside two kitchens, a hardware shop, a depot, three bread ovens, two administrative buildings, troughs, a water pump, a pharmacy, and a chemical lab, presumably used for soil-related experiments. Moreover, the administration (Figure 13) had invested in infrastructure,

building local bridges and roads. Each colonist had a house and 0.25 sq. km, of which about a fifth was cultivated, usually with corn, black beans (*feijão*), mandioca, rice, sugar cane, fruit trees, coffee, and mulberries. (Figure 14) The colonists also maintained several cows and larger numbers of goats and poultry. The administration of the settlement had already ordered a corn mill, a wood mill, and a rice processing plant but the machinery could not be delivered due to a lack of cash. The Brazilian government was optimistic about the concession, and its recent inspection of *Águia Branca* had yielded a positive result. Building upon Koszarowski's report, the legation in Rio observed, however, that conflicts occurred between the administration of *Águia Branca* and the settlers, but also that these stemmed from an improper selection of certain families, which turned out to be couples with too many small children or intelligentsia unfamiliar with farming. In general, Grabowski, otherwise critical of the colonial fervor, described the TK in positive terms but named

¹⁶⁵ "Tadeusz Grabowski to the Economic-Financial Department of the Ministry of Agricultural Reforms," February 12, 1931, 2/322/3640, MSZ, AAN.

the chronic lack of funding as the major obstacle facing Águia Branca.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, the TK's approach to colonization appeared starkly different from that of Warchałowski – the former declared that Águia Branca would accept refugees (*uchodźcy*) from Cumariá only if their financial situation matched contract requirements.¹⁶⁷ By 1932, however, the settlement in Espírito Santo was brought to a halt due to smaller emigration from Poland, a two-year-long drought, and difficulties in maintaining a constant flow of capital during the Great Depression.¹⁶⁸

In May 1932, as a result of these difficulties, the TK asked to be granted a significant loan from the Emigration Fund (*Fundusz Emigracyjny*), a special financial source operated by the



Figure 14. Colonists standing in front of their house in Águia Branca. Note the difference in appearance between these people and the members of the Polish elite seen in Figure 13. Source: AAN 2/88/21/87.

Ministry of Labor and Social Assistance.¹⁶⁹ The request was discussed in the forum of the Interministerial Emigration Commission (*Międzyministerialna Komisja Emigracyjna*, or MKE), an entity created in July 1930 and given the authority over the Emigration Fund two years later.¹⁷⁰ In August 1932, the MKE decided to allocate the loan, although a smaller sum was given, calculated to take care of Águia Branca's most debilitating debts.¹⁷¹ While not entirely pleased with the TK for its past administrative errors and overspending, the officials concluded that Águia Branca could develop further as long as

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Michał Czarnota Bojarski, "Raport sekretarza poselstwa w Rio de Janeiro na temat uciekinierów z kolonii w Peru," June 28, 1931, 3, doc. 166, PDD 1931.

¹⁶⁸ "Pro Memoria. Działalność Towarzystwa Kolonizacyjnego."

¹⁶⁹ "TK to the Prime Minister," May 18, 1932, 2/8/6/72-1, Akta Grupowe 1932-1939, Prezydium Rady Ministrów w Warszawie, AAN.

¹⁷⁰ Józef Beck, "Nr K.I. 4438/1/32," July 1932, 2/8/6/72-1, Akta Grupowe 1932-1939, Prezydium Rady Ministrów w Warszawie, AAN.

¹⁷¹ Apoloniusz Zarychta, "Nr K.I. 28/106/32 w spr.: T-wo Kolonizacyjne - pomoc ze strony Funduszu Emigracyjnego," August 11, 1932, 2/8/6/72-1, Akta Grupowe 1932-1939, Prezydium Rady Ministrów w Warszawie, AAN.

the drought ended. They also suggested that colonists should be given their farming plots for free. Consequently, a “sanitation action” (*akcja sanacyjna*) was carried out in Águia Branca by an intelligence agent named Feliks Kopczyński, resulting in a decrease in debt, new investments, personnel cuts, and a restored confidence of local Brazilian authorities.¹⁷² By 1934, the Polish government considered Águia Branca a product of its own successful intervention in the dealings of a private agency and as a settlement that would be able to absorb new colonists.¹⁷³

In addition to Espírito Santo, the TK was also granted another concession along the Piquiri River in the state of Paraná: located in a generally fertile region but one that was far removed from the nearest railway.¹⁷⁴ In 1930, however, a series of court proceedings against the TK halted its preliminary works and dried out its capital reserves.¹⁷⁵ These legal problems, in turn, ultimately resulted in the Polish government asking the TK to abandon the project.¹⁷⁶ The TK’s troubles stemmed partly from the contemporary revolutionary turmoil in Brazil, as a confederation of southern states under the leadership of Getúlio Vargas, including Rio Grande do Sul and Paraná, toppled the regime known as the Old Republic. In the course of the next decade, Vargas attempted to turn Brazil into a racially defined nation-state and to limit immigration of staunchly nationalist Europeans to prevent them from establishing large homogenous settlements.¹⁷⁷ His government

¹⁷² “Sekretariat Międzyministerialnej Komisji Emigracyjnej. Sprawa Towarzystwa Kolonizacyjnego sp. z.o.o. Przebieg akcji sanacyjnej kolonii Águia Branca,” n.d., 2/8/6/72-1, Akta Grupowe 1932-1939, Prezydium Rady Ministrów w Warszawie, AAN.

¹⁷³ “Sekretariat Międzyministerialnej Komisji Emigracyjnej. Sprawa kolonii Águia Branca w stanie Espírito Santo,” n.d., 2/8/6/72-1, Akta Grupowe 1932-1939, Prezydium Rady Ministrów w Warszawie, AAN.

¹⁷⁴ “Legation in Rio de Janeiro to the Emigration Office,” March 20, 1931, 702/13/429, Polish Legation in Rio de Janeiro, PIASA.

¹⁷⁵ “Pro Memoria. Działalność Towarzystwa Kolonizacyjnego.” Also see units 702/13/125, 702/13/0/428, and 702/13/0/430 in Polish Legation in Rio de Janeiro, PIASA.

¹⁷⁶ “Sekretariat Międzyministerialnej Komisji Emigracyjnej. Sprawa Towarzystwa Kolonizacyjnego sp. z.o.o. Przebieg akcji sanacyjnej kolonii Águia Branca.”

¹⁷⁷ See, for example, Thomas E. Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Daryle Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930-1945* (Duke University Press, 2001).

passed laws that restricted the annual number of immigrants allowed into Brazil to only 2% of the number of the sending country's citizens currently living there.¹⁷⁸ By 1934, the Polish legation would observe Rio de Janeiro's increasingly negative attitude toward establishing large clusters of foreigners in Paraná, especially when plans of Assyrian immigration into Brazil became known to the Brazilian public.¹⁷⁹ By 1938, 200 Polish schools would be closed in Paraná, which created so much tension that Polish officials considered coordinating anti-Brazilian sanctions with other European powers, including Nazi Germany.¹⁸⁰

Moving away from Colonial Pioneering in South America

While the Polish government's lax supervision of the settlements in Montaña and Espírito Santo certainly contributed to their collapse, so did the Great Depression, which emptied national coffers and contributed to the rise of authoritarian tendencies in both Europe and South America. Because of related financial losses, the BGK, a co-sponsor of the exploratory expedition to Montaña in 1928, could not finance the Polish-American Corporation's Sepa a couple of years later.¹⁸¹ In fact, the Great Depression not only inhibited particular actions of colonial pioneering in South America but forced a redefinition of Polish emigration policies in South America. By increasing demand for emigration from Poland and further limiting capital necessary to develop the country's industry, the global crisis encouraged the Polish state to shift its focus from colonial pioneering to reinforcing and expanding existing settlements in the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland (Figure 15), which was viewed as an area where the Polish state could more easily control emigrants and turn them into its agents.

¹⁷⁸ "Nr 71. Notatka w sprawie interwencji przez posła Brazylii Pimentela," April 1935, 2/322/9577, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁷⁹ Jan Wagner, "Polish Legation in Rio de Janeiro to the Emigration Division," January 29, 1934, 2/322/9814, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁸⁰ "Delegate Ritter to Wilhelmstrasse," May 26, 1928, RAV Warschau 91, PAAA.

¹⁸¹ Laroche, "Note relative à l'émigration polonaise au Pérou."

In the aftermath of Peru, Polish officials observed that emigrants allowed to leave Poland for South America, in particular for Brazil, needed to be selected more carefully than ever. Tadeusz Grabowski considered a better selection process a remedy for the bad reputation that Poles “earned



Figure 15. Map showing the location of the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland. Edited from: Hydrographic Office of the U.S. Navy (Public Domain). Copyright of the edited version: Piotr Puchalski.

for themselves” in South America. Mentioning his “ungrateful work” intervening in cases of “dishonesty, sloppiness, drunkenness, laziness, theft, aggression, and insubordination,” he stated that better “element” should be chosen for emigration, or else Poland’s prestige would continue to suffer.¹⁸² At the same time, the effects of the Great Depression made the proposition that only farmers should be sent to South

American sound logical. Kazimierz Downarowicz, the new Polish consul in Curitiba, underlined that, a result of the crisis, emigrants to Paraná could no longer easily find part-time jobs in industry or public works. Therefore, the primary objective of Poland’s “colonial program” should instead be to increase the number of Polish farmers emigrating, as well as their collective “account of possession” in Paraná.¹⁸³ In a similar vein, the consul discouraged establishing colonies close to any remaining functional industry, as it carried the risk of detracting Polish emigrants from taking

¹⁸² “Tadeusz Grabowski to Franciszek Sokół,” February 10, 1931, 3–4, 2/322/3637, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁸³ Kazimierz Downarowicz, “Nr 27/tj/31. Raport w sprawie Organizacji Wychodźstwa Polskiego w okręgu Konsulatu,” February 18, 1931, 14, 2/322/3640, MSZ, AAN.

up land.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, Polish statesmen worried about the “national consciousness” and dynamism of the old diaspora, in which they drew inspiration from the Germans. In 1931, in a report from his journey through Chile, Stefan Markowski, a representative of the Emigration Office, observed that children born to German emigrants in Chile grew less industrious than their parents, which resulted in Germany’s need to constantly reinvigorate the diaspora with new arrivals from the mother country.¹⁸⁵

Reinvigorating the old settlements and creating supplementary colonies in proximity to already existing ones, as opposed to “pioneering” new territories like Peru, gradually turned into the Polish government’s priority during the Great Depression. Grabowski, for example, discouraged the Emigration Office from pursuing settlement projects outside of Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul, and Santa Catarina, underlining that “a newly arrived emigrant, reinforcing the existing Polish element, will be able to survive the first, harder period of colonization more easily.”¹⁸⁶ Downarowicz proposed the following policies as part of such reinforcement: protecting Polish farmers from speculation, brokering their land purchases, and establishing warehouses selling products imported from Poland. According to him, all responsibility for these policies should be concentrated in one agency based in Poland, which would be capable of disciplining its local subsidiaries overseas.¹⁸⁷ Mieczysław Lepecki entertained similar ideas. In February 1931, the activist encouraged interested parties in Poland to take advantage of the Great Depression and purchase land in South America at lower rates than ever before. He also suggested the creation of an emigration bureau in Curitiba, which would serve as an intermediary agency between arriving

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 8.

¹⁸⁵ Stefan Markowski, “Raport wysłannika Urzędu Emigracyjnego na temat możliwości emigracji do Ameryki Południowej,” January 21, 1931, 54, doc. 17, PDD 1931.

¹⁸⁶ “Tadeusz Grabowski to the Emigration Office,” February 16, 1931, 2/322/3637, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁸⁷ Downarowicz, “Nr 27/tj/31. Raport w sprawie Organizacji Wychodźstwa Polskiego w okręgu Konsulatu,” 16–28.

emigrants and real estate brokers, directing the former to where foreign “elements” endangered “Polishness.”¹⁸⁸ Downarowicz’s idea of creating a central agency for Polish settlement was fulfilled in the second half of the 1930s, once the Polish economy recovered. In the meantime, however, the capital-stripped Polish government negotiated with foreign companies to preserve the “Polishness” of projected supplementary settlements in northern Paraná in order to turn them into state agents.

In October 1928, a representative of the “Compahnia de Terras Norte de Paraná,” a subsidiary of the British corporation “Parana Plantations Limited,” proposed establishing Polish settlements in the area around the town of Londrina, where it operated concessions equal to 12,000 sq. km (Figure 16).¹⁸⁹ During the negotiations that ensued in Warsaw, the British opposed the Polish idea of isolating the projected settlements to help them resist assimilation. In July 1932, an employee of the corporation pointed out that: “In the light of my own practical knowledge of local conditions on our land, the attempt to establish a colony of Poles, fresh from Europe, in the virgin forest at a distance of about 80 kilometers from the railway and of about 40 kilometers from the nearest other human beings, was not practical this year or next and would be attended with too great risks of failure.”¹⁹⁰ Instead, the British official assured the Polish government that “Poles will be settled in homogenous communities” as long as “these communities will be at no excessive distance from one another,” suggesting a formerly Czech settlement of “Nova Vlast” as one possible location.¹⁹¹ By September 1934, however, not a single family left Poland because of

¹⁸⁸ Lepecki, Mieczysław Bohdan, “Memoriał kierownika Patronatu Polskiego w Rio de Janeiro, p. Bohdana Lepeckiego, w sprawie kolonizacji Parany,” February 1931, 2/322/3637, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁸⁹ “Józef Potocki to the Polish consul in Curitiba,” October 28, 1931, 2/322/3637, MSZ, AAN; “Towarzystwo Kolonizacyjne Północnej Parany / Parana Plantations - Companhia de Terras Norte do Parana / w Brazylii,” May 1934, 2/322/9814, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁹⁰ “Parana Plantations Limited to Kazimierz Komierowski,” July 21, 1932, 1, A.42/8, Polish Consulate General in London, PISM.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

further disagreements and because of the Vargas regime's increasingly hostile attitude toward immigration.¹⁹² The Polish desire for homogeneous and isolated settlements in Paraná contradicted pragmatic considerations of their sustainability, making the shift away from pioneering new areas like Peru appear less revolutionary.

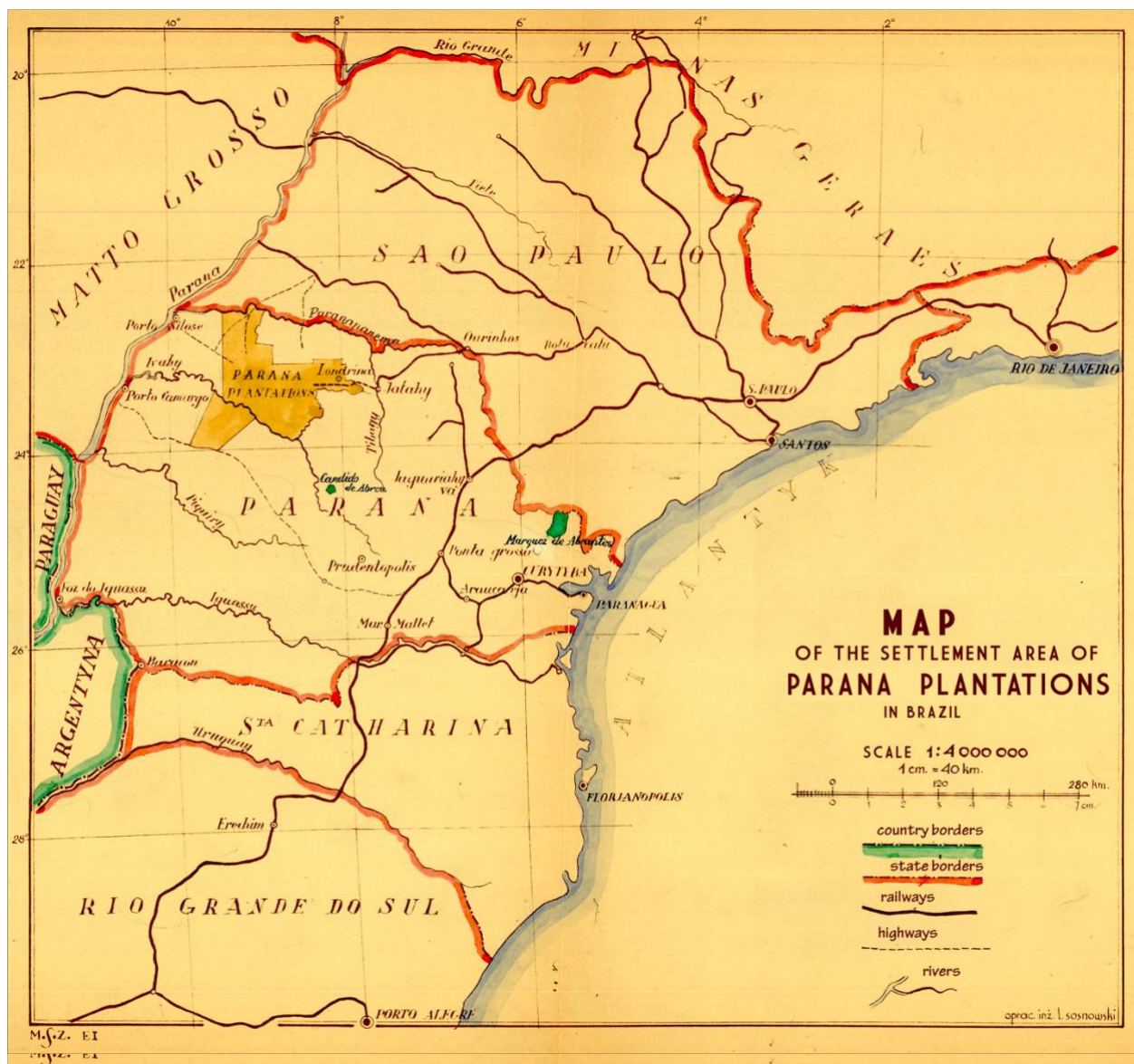


Figure 16. Map showing the concession of Parana Plantations in Brazil. Edited from: AAN 2/322/9814. Copyright of the edited version: Piotr Puchalski.

¹⁹² Pawlikowski, "Parana Plantations Limited to the Emigration Division," June 22, 1934, 2/322/9814, MSZ, AAN; Karol Ripa, "Pro Domo," September 19, 1934, 2/322/9814, MSZ, AAN; "The Consular Department to the Polish Legation in London," September 5, 1935, A.42/8, Polish Consulate General in London, PISM.

The persistent obsession with keeping Polish colonies in South America homogenous, or as Polish-Catholic as possible, was related to the understanding that nationality (*narodowość*) was not synonymous with citizenship, which became crucial as the Polish government encouraged the emigration of national minorities later in the 1930s. In the meantime, however, Polish leaders shared this understanding with their geopolitical foes, the Germans. By 1926, the Weimar regime adopted a negative stance toward Polish emigration policies, afraid that Warsaw might encourage ethnic Germans, who were supposed to remain in Poland in order to serve as Germany's agents of influence, to emigrate to South America.¹⁹³ In fact, however, Berlin used Germans holding different passports to infiltrate spaces in which they could otherwise not operate as citizens of the Reich. In February 1928, for example, the Polish military intelligence, the Second Department of General Staff (*Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego*, or *Dwójka*), conveyed the news of Bolivia's employment of German military instructors, whose Gdańsk-issued passports allowed the Reich to circumvent Versailles regulations prohibiting it from establishing military bases abroad.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, Berlin exploited the contradictions between nationality and citizenship to sabotage Polish colonial projects. In particular, Pankiewicz suspected that German agents stood behind the escape of Polish colonists, many of whom allegedly had German origins, from Cumaría.¹⁹⁵

Conclusion

This chapter serves as a synthetic examination of the interplay between Polish colonial ideas, emigration policies, individual ambitions, and state interests in South America. In the 1920s, emigration activists of many political stripes were united around the Polish-Catholic definition of

¹⁹³ "German Embassy in Warsaw to Wilhelmstrasse," June 30, 1926, RAV Warschau 57, PAAA.

¹⁹⁴ Tadeusz Grabowski, "Gdańsk dostawcą instruktorów dla armii boliwijskiej," February 8, 1928, I.303.4.4293, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego, CAW WBH.

¹⁹⁵ See Jarnecki, "Peruwiańska porażka i próba jej naprawy," 114.

the nation. In turn, they advocated for the channeling of the “necessary evil” of economic emigration to South America, where a lower chance of assimilation and the presence of more natural wealth would allegedly allow emigrants to become colonists working to Poland’s economic and political benefit. These colonial-minded actors, previously engaged in the emigration affairs of partitioned Poland, transitioned to manage state and semi-state agencies responsible for emigration policies in the interwar period, simultaneously serving as attachés, lobbyists, and consuls. While most of them promoted the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland as an area where existing Polish-Catholic colonies should be reinforced, others believed that new settlements in Peru and more northern Brazil states should be pioneered to ensure that emigrants become the agents of the Polish state.

The Polish government’s inability to control the more or less corrupt private entities with which it had to cooperate, however, contributed to the failure of colonial pioneering along the Ucayali in Peru and to its great difficulties in Espírito Santo. At the same time, the intermediary position of many of this chapter’s protagonists not only testifies to continuities in national leadership across independence, at least insofar as emigration was concerned, but also challenges our understanding of the modern state as only dependent upon official government agencies.

Chapter 2

Roads to Modernity

“The same causes necessitating the launching of an intense Polish colonization in South America also dictate the unquestionable need for the state to search for free [*wolny*] territories of colonial character, where Polish economic and commercial exploitation would take place and to which the emigration of Polish specialists would be channeled.”¹

In the early 1930s, the idea of colonial pioneering in South America yielded to the policy of reinforcing existing colonies in the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland. This was hardly the end of colonial pioneering, however, for many of the actors engaged in South America also promoted expansion in Africa. According to them, such an expansion was Poland’s road to modernity, or a means of advancing from a post-imperial periphery to the colonial core. In contrast to those interested in mass emigration to South America for a combination of demographic and economic reasons, the circles interested in Africa promoted projects of limited settlement for more commercial purposes. For them, the dragging of Poland into the modern age through Africa implied the elimination of Western intermediaries from the trade with the continent, which was a task that encouraged Polish leaders to navigate the Wilsonian international system. In particular, they began to consider the uncertain status of League of Nations mandates, which they viewed as potential objects of economic penetration. This chapter examines the origins and growth of Polish ideas about colonial expansion in Africa, or the gradual construction of the Colonial Question.

Chambers of Versailles

The idea of Polish colonial expansion in Africa emerged as Polish elites debated their newly created state’s role in the Wilsonian international system during the Paris Peace Conference

¹ “Sprawozdanie MSZ: działalność w sprawach kolonialnych i emigracyjnych (fragmenty),” December 20, 1933, 833, doc. 372, PDD 1933.

of 1919. While preoccupied with matters ranging from the shape of Poland's borders to the adoption of the despised Minority Treaty, Polish diplomats wrote correspondence and memoranda to discuss the emergence of internationalist ideology, describing the institutionalization of the international system as a positive development. One of them was Tomasz E. Starczewski, a landowner from Galicia and an ally of the conservative peasant party "Piast."² He described the projected establishment of the League of Nations as an attempt at a slow-paced change of the world order and as a remedy to the absolutism of modern states that trumped the rights of men and nations. According to him, its proponents included idealists worrying about the negative effects of interdependence in international economic relations and wishing to reform the capitalist system to avert a world-wide social revolution. Starczewski pointed out that internationalist ideas proved too radical for the wealthy and too impotent for those "possessed by socialist doctrine."³ He recognized the intrinsic value of a forum in which any problematic matter could be raised, but also argued that only issues that related to all member states should be put to an international vote, for example those related to postal services, copyrights, currency, and the access to raw materials. Anxious about the outcome of the peace talks, Starczewski wished for the victorious powers to keep the number of states dissatisfied with the treaties to a minimum and to refrain from naively wasting an advantage over the defeated powers in the name of a lasting peace.⁴

In addition to recognizing the potential of the League of Nations to maintain peace, Starczewski discerned its potential in empowering his country's expansion. He wrote that, through the adoption of a leading role in inventing new forms of international existence, Poland could

² See Andrzej A. Zięba, "Tomasz Eugeniusz Marcei Starczewski," in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, ed. Stanisław Mazowiecki and Seweryn Stawiarski, vol. 42 (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 2003), 281–84.

³ E. Starczewski, "Notatka Wydziału Prawnego MSZ o Lidze Narodów," March 8, 1919, 441–42, doc. 186, PDD 1919/I.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 442–46.

“acquire an international mandate in eastern matters and attach to the Polish state countries of mixed population that are adjacent to its ethnographic spine.”⁵ The “countries” mentioned referred to Poland’s disputed eastern borderlands, where, unsurprisingly, Starczewski himself was a landowner and a liberal proponent of a peaceful assimilation of minorities.⁶ In fact, most of the contemporary Polish elites, as citizens of a state fighting Bolshevik Russia at the time, harbored hopes that anti-communist struggles would earn nascent Poland an international mandate over any multiethnic eastern territory that it managed to conquer from Bolshevik Russia. At least one ethnoreligious group in the region, which used Wilsonian ideas to leverage its precarious position on the frontlines of collapsing empires, kept such expectations alive. In May 1920, in an attempt to save Crimea from the Bolsheviks and White Russians alike, a Tartar leader named Djafer Seydamet submitted an appeal to the Secretary General of the League of Nations, Eric Drummond, asking him to allow Poland to assume mandatory power over his people.⁷ Polish diplomats gladly promoted Seydamet’s letters abroad, especially in local press outlets.⁸ Unfortunately for the Polish eastern efforts, however, Britain’s Lloyd George, displaying a typically British obsession with Europe’s balance of power, opposed a large Polish territorial expansion at Russia’s expense.⁹

It was in Africa, not in eastern Europe, where great powers ruled territories as League of Nations mandates. In turn, Africa became the other area in which Polish diplomats considered expanding their country’s influence during the Paris Peace Conference. Writing to one of his colleagues, the Polish National Committee’s correspondent in Stockholm, A. de Pomian, reported

⁵ Ibid., 447.

⁶ Zięba, “Tomasz Eugeniusz Marcei Starczewski.”

⁷ “Djafer Seydamet to the Secretariat of the League of Nations,” May 17, 1920, 2/503/169, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

⁸ “Polish Legation in Bern to the Polish Legation in London,” May 18, 1920, 2/503/169, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

⁹ See, for example, Henryk Batowski, *Między dwiema wojnami 1919-1939 : zarys historii dyplomatycznej* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001), 27–33.

that Swedish journalists disseminated information about Polish representatives in Paris demanding that a part of the former German colony of Cameroon be awarded to Poland. Pomian stated that a Swedish acquaintance of his from Africa, an erstwhile colonist in Africa, had told him the story of Stefan Szolc-Rogozński's averted conflict with his Swedish neighbors, also settlers in Cameroon, which almost took place in 1882. The correspondent reminded his colleague in London that Szolc-Rogozński, a Pole from the Russian partition unable to submit the area under his control to a Polish state, surrendered it to Britain under the condition that it never became German. Contrary to their promise, however, the British handed Cameroon over to Germany at the Congress of Berlin. Since the "Polish" explorer had been thus deceived at the hands of the British, Pomian's argument proceeded, Poland could lay a moral claim to Cameroon based upon Szolc-Rogozński legacy, especially since the departure of the Germans allegedly temporarily rendered that territory *terra nullius*, or *tabula rasa*.¹⁰ In a strange act of selective compassion, the Polish correspondent in Sweden made a claim of a past Polish condition of being victim to imperialism and suggested that a mandate in an abstracted, depopulated Africa might best compensate for it. It is not known what the representative of the Polish National Committee in London wrote in response to Pomian's suggestion.

In addition to occupying the minds of diplomats such as Pomian, the possibility of colonial acquisitions in Africa also intrigued experts from the Bureau of Congress Works (*Biuro Prac Kongresowych*), a social institution created to assist the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in securing Poland's interests at Versailles. It is unclear whether the initiative to write memoranda on the topic came from individuals from outside the government who wished to influence the negotiations

¹⁰ A. de Pomian, "List Korespondenta KNP w Sztokholmie do przedstawiciela Komitetu w Londynie w sprawach bieżących," January 24, 1919, 135–36, doc. 67, PDD 1919/I.

taking place in Paris, or whether the impulse had been sent down from the diplomatic apparatus itself. Kazimierz Warchałowski, without an official function at the time, credited himself years later for having sent a telegram to the Polish National Committee in Paris, in which he suggested that former German colonies in Africa should be considered a potential form of compensation for the German devastation of the Kingdom of Poland during World War I. According to him, the Polish delegation had ignored his request, believing the chances of the undertaking to be minimal and failing to take advantage of French-British feuds over West Africa.¹¹ In any case, it is difficult to draw distinct lines between “social” and “political” actors at the dawn of Polish independence. Warchałowski would soon become an official delegate to South America, while the author of one of the colonial memos, Walerian Bukowiecki-Olszewski, would serve as a consul in Winnipeg, Canada in 1920.¹²

Although in his memo Bukowiecki-Olszewski mostly examined the comparative value of former German colonies, the document can be seen as containing a prototype of more complex arguments for colonial expansion in Africa. His rationale for demanding colonies for Poland was as follows: countries with moderate climate required colonies with warm climate to supply them with goods (tea, coffee, rice) and raw materials (fibers, rubber, oils) impossible to farm in the metropole. According to him, European states had been able to sustain their wealth during the pre-industrial era through farming and occasional imports of luxurious goods. Currently, however, the “commercial-industrial era” favored not only colonial empires such as Britain and France but also continental powers such as the United States and Russia, which encompassed territories of various climates and made others dependent on their resources. Bukowiecki-Olszewski predicted that

¹¹ Kazimierz Warchałowski, “Przyczynek do historii polskiej akcji kolonizacyjnej,” *Morze*, no. 9 (1932): 24.

¹² See Patryk Polec, *Hurrah Revolutionaries: The Polish Canadian Communist Movement, 1918-1948* (McGill-Queen’s Press, 2015), 55.

independent Poland would be caught in a vicious circle, whereby raw materials necessary for industrial development could only be purchased with hard currency. In turn, the supply of gold would be limited in the non-industrial country whose surplus labor would emigrate to industrial countries.¹³ While stressing the ways in which Poland would benefit from having colonies, the expert also referenced the concept of a “civilizing mission”: occupying a place among “cultured nations,” the Poles bore co-responsibility for uplifting what they saw as culturally inferior Africans. Moreover, at the end of the memo came a legalistic argument: since the Polish provinces of the former German Reich contributed 8-9% of its imperial budget, a corresponding proportion of its former colonial possessions should be awarded to Poland as reparations.¹⁴

Leon Bulowski, a future general and colonial activist, authored the other “colonial” memo presented to the Polish delegation at Versailles, which he would expand into a monograph more than a decade later.¹⁵ In addition to economic reasons, Bulowski employed political and historical logic to argue for Poland’s colonial acquisitions, suggesting, for example, that colonies often came to the rescue of their metropolises, which had been supposedly evident in France’s receiving military assistance from Africa and in the United States helping Britain during World War I.¹⁶ He noted inaccurately that “Poles had captured Madagascar” and had died in the thousands fighting in Santo Domingo and Egypt “to preserve those countries for France.”¹⁷ He claimed, moreover, that an ancient colonial prowess of the Poles had allowed them to rebuild the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth’s eastern borderlands after Turkish and Tartar invasions. Bulowski also called for

¹³ Walerian Bukowiecki-Olszewski, “Wartość porównawcza poszczególnych kolonii niemieckich,” 1919, 1–3, 2/515/4/59, Biuro Prac Kongresowych, AAN.

¹⁴ Ibid., 3.

¹⁵ Leon Bulowski, *Kolonie dla Polski* (Warsaw, 1932).

¹⁶ Leon Bulowski, “Memoriał w sprawie uzyskania kolonii dla Polski oraz opis kolonii niemieckich,” n.d., 1, 2/515/4/60, Biuro Prac Kongresowych, AAN.

¹⁷ Ibid., 2.

Poland to be compensated with 8% of German colonial territory, since, according to his calculations, such a percentage of the former German metropolitan population of 70,000,000 now lived under Polish rule. In this context, the future general listed real crimes committed in Germany's occupation zone, including forced labor, agricultural requisitions, factory demolitions, and unlawful arrests. Lastly, Bulowski suggested that Poland should rest its colonial claims on "Wilsonian rules," according to which colonies would supposedly be distributed to states needing them.¹⁸ His memo displayed a table showing Poland's projected annual consumption of "colonial goods" per capita to argue that an average person in the country would in twenty-five years consume a total of 2381,230 kg of tobacco, rice, cotton, etc.¹⁹

Bukowiecki-Olszewski and Bulowski's reasoning foreshadowed the core elements of colonial discourse in interwar Poland, which would encompass and/or discard other arguments for colonial expansion in relation to internal and external developments. Generality was a remarkable characteristic of these early documents, however: their authors did not, for example, suggest the future financial or political relationship between Poland and its "colonies." Moreover, the memos appeared at the time when Poland's ownership of a coast, considered any country's prerequisite to colonial aspirations, was itself not fully determined, and the idea of Poles accessing the Baltic through foreign territory was pitched as an alternative.²⁰ In fact, the tentative status of Poland's maritime access was probably the factor persuading the Polish diplomats at Versailles not to embark on a colonial campaign. Still, the calls for colonies did not occur in a geopolitical vacuum but in a world where the highly colonial character of the international system determined the ways in which commercial exchange, international migration, and environmental exploitation took

¹⁸ Ibid., 2–3.

¹⁹ Ibid., 4.

²⁰ See, for example, Wakar, "Dostęp do morza," n.d., 2/515/4/276, Biuro Prac Kongresowych, AAN.

place. In effect, Polish elites merged maritime and economic aspirations with colonial ambitions from the moment the Polish state was born.

Madagascar, Episode 1

In the early years of independence, requests to acquire colonies for Poland emerged not only in Paris but also in Poland. In March 1919, a radical member of the Polish Peasants' Party (*Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe*), Tomasz Dąbal, discussed the possibility of expansion into Africa in the context of providing emigration outlets to peasants.²¹ It was Kazimierz Warchałowski's activity, however, that caused the biggest commotion among political observers. After conducting loose talks with French colonial officials in Dakar in 1920, Warchałowski was to learn that France was hardly thrilled with its new acquisitions of Cameroon and Togo, where German excesses had left the internal situation tense and the cost of maintenance high. According to him, the French expressed honest surprise that "Poland did not take the opportunity to gain a mandate over one of the former German colonies."²² Subsequently, Warchałowski learned about the attempts of the agronomist and explorer Jean (Jan) Dybowski (Figure 1), a respected French citizen of Polish extraction with a sentiment for the country of his ancestry, to broker a colonial deal between Poland and France. The two men soon met in Paris, where Dybowski told Warchałowski about his own memo concerning the desirability of Poland's receiving a colonial mandate. Although it had been written in consultation with the French government, the Polish delegation at Versailles allegedly left Dybowski's memo without an answer.²³

²¹ Wojciech Wiśniewski and Tomasz Zan, *Ostatni z rodu: rozmowy z Tomaszem Zanem* (Editions Spotkania, 1989), 78.

²² Warchałowski, "Przyczynek do historii polskiej akcji kolonizacyjnej," 24.

²³ *Ibid.*, 24–25.



Figure 1. Portrait of Jean Dybowski. Source: Public Domain.

Warchałowski and Dybowski made a joint effort to lobby their respective governments to create a colonial concession in which Poland would enjoy its own currency and police force. The possibility of making such an arrangement allegedly existed in Madagascar, the “great island” off the southeast coast of Africa, which had been declared a French colony in 1897 after a series of protracted wars against the indigenous Malagasy. While abolishing slavery and investing significant funds into developing its infrastructure, the French conquerors of Madagascar also

wished for French emigrants to come to their new possession instead of leaving for the United States.²⁴ Likewise, the proposal of channeling Polish emigration to Madagascar made to the peasant leader Wiktor Skołyśzewski in 1908 was probably related to the desire to bring larger numbers of white settlers to Madagascar to reinforce French rule.²⁵ In 1921, Warchałowski was skeptical about the choice of Madagascar but persuaded several decision-makers in Warsaw, including the Minister of Agriculture, Józef Raczyński, to support Dybowski’s concept.²⁶ Dybowski’s premature travel to Warsaw precipitated ridicule in the Polish press, however. In particular, the radical left-wing *Robotnik* (Worker) published attacks against Dybowski and Raczyński in June 1921.²⁷ In one of the articles, a socialist author observed that Madagascar and Congo, replete with yellow fever and infectious insects, were not healthy destinations for

²⁴ See Eric T. Jennings, *Perspectives on French Colonial Madagascar* (Springer, 2017), 17.

²⁵ Jan Stapiński, *Pamiętniki*, ed. Krzysztof Dunin-Wąsowicz (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1958), 294–95.

²⁶ Warchałowski, “Przyczynek do historii polskiej akcji kolonizacyjnej,” 25.

²⁷ J.N.K., “Polscy murzyni,” *Robotnik*, June 1, 1921, 1; Hieronimko, “Żołnierz Królowej Madagaskaru,” *Robotnik*, June 12, 1921, 1–2.

emigrants, and that Africa would only serve as a security valve for aristocrats looking to get rid of peasants and turn them into *murzyni*, or slaves, overseas.²⁸ Moreover, the newspaper accused Raczyński of naïveté: Poland did not possess the means to run colonies. The title of the article, “Żołnierz Królowej Madagaskaru” (The Soldier of the Queen of Madagascar), was therefore appropriate, referring to Stanisław Dobrzański’s popular turn-of-the-century vaudeville play in which a provincial Polish lawyer succumbs to a world of illusion while courting a young theater actress.²⁹

In the same month, minister Raczyński felt compelled to address the issue in the Sejm. In response to a peasant representative accusing wealthy landowners of delaying agrarian reforms in the country by sending peasants to Africa, Raczyński explained that the primary purpose of Dybowski’s visit was to examine the state of agriculture in Poland and to promote Polish-French commercial exchange. In the second place, Dybowski encouraged Poles to turn into self-sufficient producers of “colonial goods,” which they would truly become only if they received an autonomous territory in Africa from France. The Frenchman, Raczyński continued to explain, suggested that candidates for colonists might be found among economic migrants and that a Polish commission would be able to select appropriate territory in terms of climate and soil.³⁰ While fairly presenting Dybowski’s proposals and underlining their “gentle” character, however, Raczyński distanced himself from them. In his Sejm remarks, the minister emphasized the tragedy of the Polish participation in the Napoleonic pacification of revolutionary Haiti, during which thousands of Polish soldiers perished, as still haunting the nation. He pigeonholed Dybowski’s proposal,

²⁸ Hieronimko, “Żołnierz Królowej Madagaskaru,” 1–2.

²⁹ Stanisław Dobrzański, *Żołnierz królowej Madagaskaru: komedia w trzech aktach*, Biblioteka Teatrów Amatorskich 65 (Lwów: Odrodzenie, 1921).

³⁰ “Transcript of the 233th Session of the Legislative Sejm,” June 10, 1921, 28–38, RP/II/0/233, Biblioteka Sejmowa.

assuring the assembly that a final response to the Frenchman would be drafted in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³¹ Moreover, while the minister yielded to left-wing pressure, Alfred Chłapowski, Poland's ambassador in Paris at the time, believed the governor of Madagascar when the latter suggested that Poland's pursuing any colonial undertaking in his domain would prove futile.³²

The failure of Dybowski's efforts did not cause Warchałowski to surrender his dream of "colonies" for Poland, however. He instead advertised colonial matters as connected to the issue of emigration. In 1923, writing for the conservative right-of-center daily *Rzeczpospolita*, Warchałowski sidelined Africa for the sake of South America. Distinguishing between "economic" (*zarobkowy*) emigration to the industrial "North" and "settler" (*osadniczy*) emigration to the agricultural "South," he suggested that the latter type of emigration was superior as it moved the "industrial means of production" closer to the "location of production of raw materials."³³ At the same time, while identifying the quest for African colonies as one aspect of Poland's colonial program, he suggested that his country lacked a strong state apparatus to exploit Africa in the highly "capitalist" fashion that its "subtropical" climate required.³⁴

From Gdynia to Africa

Unlike Warchałowski, other colonial-minded emigration activists looked more favorably at the possibility of expanding into Africa as the construction of Gdynia, Poland's alternative port to the German-dominated Gdańsk, was launched. Already in 1922, a series of articles from *Wychodźca* called for initiating colonial trade with West Africa through Gdynia. One contributor, Jan Zajączkowski, extolled the inexhaustibility of African resources and argued that trading

³¹ Ibid.

³² W., "Madagaskarskie komplikacje," *Wychodźca*, March 17, 1938, 6.

³³ Kazimierz Warchałowski, "Polska polityka kolonialna," *Rzeczpospolita*, July 5, 1923.

³⁴ Ibid.

factories and plantations should be established in the former German colonies, where cotton and rubber farms supposedly lay fallow since their previous masters' departure. In addition, Zajączkowski suggested Liberia as Poland's potential commercial outpost where his countrymen would have an opportunity to befriend local producers, disillusioned with other whites, and introduce a new system of fair trade.³⁵ Another writer pointed to the story of Szolc-Rogoziński's settlement to suggest Cameroon as the location of a potential trading factory. He underlined that, since "trade follows the flag," a limited "economic colonization" should be carried out in the region once Poland's merchant marine was built.³⁶ Finally, in May 1924, Mieczysław Lepecki was the first contributor to make an explicit claim that Poland should obtain political colonies in Africa. Lepecki suggested the Portuguese possessions of Angola and Mozambique, whose financing Lisbon supposedly begrudged, and viewed them as both sources of colonial goods and emigration outlets.³⁷

The idea of establishing colonies where Poles had not yet settled emerged partly as a corollary of the idea that Polish emigrants served their mother country as economic agents in South America. Building upon their claims of a pioneer essence of the Polish "element" in Brazil and Argentina, many activists developed a conviction that colonists should be sent to build settlements from scratch in "economically young" countries, to use Gustaw Załęcki's language.³⁸ Experts at the PTE did not locate all such countries in South America but also pointed to French and

³⁵ Jan Zajączkowski, "O źródło surowców dla Polski," *Wychodźca*, August 27, 1922, 5–9.

³⁶ "Pod adresem ludzi przedsiębiorczych w Polsce (I)," *Wychodźca*, September 3, 1922, 2–7; "Pod adresem ludzi przedsiębiorczych w Polsce (II)," *Wychodźca*, September 10, 1922, 2–7.

³⁷ Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, "O przyszłość naszego wychodźstwa i własne kolonie," *Wychodźca*, May 4, 1924, 5–10.

³⁸ See Gustaw Załęcki, *Szkice do gospodarczej teorii europejskiego osadnictwa rolnego w krajach gospodarczo-młodych*, Studia Kolonialne (Biblioteka Polska, 1927).

Portuguese colonies such as Algeria, Madagascar, and Mozambique.³⁹ One colonial-minded emigration activist in particular inaugurated the turn toward the idea of building Polish “colonies” from scratch outside of South America: Kazimierz Głuchowski (1885–1941).⁴⁰ Initially, Głuchowski, a former Polish consul in Curitiba, had been a champion of the Polish peasant’s prowess in South America. In 1927, he published calculations concerning the number and size of Polish and “Ruthenian” households in Paran , showing that as much as 20% of that state’s cultivated land belonged to settlers whom Poland could claim for the “Pia ” nation.⁴¹ At the same time, however, Głuchowski was becoming the leading proponent of channeling limited emigration to Africa. In one article published in *Kwartalnik*, Głuchowski argued for the “necessity of finding new, appropriate areas for our settlement,” which, given the legacy of Beniowski and Szolc-Rogoziński, was for him a perfectly feasible task. He pointed to Angola, in particular, as an area appropriate for Poles not only economically but also politically, since Portugal, as one of the small states possessing vast colonies, “needed settlers as good as ours.”⁴² (Appendix 6)

Another colonial activist expressed that mental transition from South America to Africa quite explicitly. Janusz Makarczyk (1901–1960), a traveler and diplomat with consular experience from Chicago and Jerusalem, was originally a proponent of channeling Polish emigration to South America.⁴³ By the end of the decade, however, Makarczyk became dubious about Poland’s colonial prospects in South America. He admired Polish colonies in Paran , calling them “wonders,” but

³⁹ Zygmunt Kiernik, “Algier jako teren kolonizacyjny polski,” *Kwartalnik Naukowego Instytutu Emigracyjnego i Kolonialnego* 5, no. 3–4 (1930): 23–92; Z. Ludkiewicz and A.  abko-Potowicz, “Kolonie francuskie jako mo liwy teren polskiej emigracji osadniczej,” *Kwartalnik Naukowego Instytutu Emigracyjnego i Kolonialnego* 5, no. 1–2 (1930): 206–15.

⁴⁰ “Heart Attack Fatal,” *The Lethbridge Herald*, September 17, 1941, 14.

⁴¹ Kazimierz Głuchowski, “Przyczynki do bada  nad ekspansywno ci  polskiego kolonisty-rolnika,” *Kwartalnik Naukowego Instytutu do Bada  Emigracji i Kolonizacji* 2, no. 1 (1927): 110–17.

⁴² Kazimierz Głuchowski, “Angola jako teren ewentualnej polskiej kolonizacji,” *Kwartalnik Naukowego Instytutu Emigracyjnego* 2, no. 4 (1927): 169.

⁴³ Janusz Makarczyk, *Nowa Brazylia* (Warsaw: M. Arcta, 1929).

also considered the opportunity of making use of them long gone:

“The Polish pioneer [in Brazil] has cleared virgin forests, become a farmer, preserved his nationality. But what is the result of that for Poland? Let us say openly – none. No merchants followed the peasant-settler and to this day foreigners [are in charge of] trading Polish products, selling not Polish, but foreign tools to our peasant. (...) The same can be said of our emigration to other countries in South America (...) since the ever-heavier assimilatory pressure of [local] governments pulls our peasant into the orbit of the young South American nationalities [that are] in the process of formation.”⁴⁴

Instead of sending emigrants to South America, where nationalist policies deterred attempts to turn European settlements into united economic units, Makarczyk suggested instead that, following a period of colonial pioneering, Polish emigration should be channeled to the underpopulated and labor-hungry Africa. He hoped that in Africa Polish settlers would be allowed to concentrate along national lines, colonial products would be bought directly from producers, and Polish domestic industry would find markets.⁴⁵ In this manner, Makarczyk’s interest in Africa stemmed from his previous activities in South America and from his (correct) prediction that countries such as Brazil and Argentina would not allow quasi-independent colonies to pursue their own economic policies.

At the same time, it was also the existence of a powerful organization aiming to expand Poland’s commercial network in the world that encouraged Głuchowski’s and Makarczyk’s reorientation toward Africa. The origins of the organization in question, the Maritime and River League (*Liga Morska i Rzeczna*, or LMiR), date back to October 1918, when sailors, admirals, and maritime experts from the three partitions congregated in Warsaw to formulate a maritime program

⁴⁴ Janusz Makarczyk in Jerzy Chmielewski, *Angola. Notatki z podróży po Afryce* (Warsaw: M. Arcta, 1929), 6–7.

⁴⁵ Janusz Makarczyk in *Ibid.*, 9–11.

for the independent state expected to receive a modest Baltic coast. Initially, the aim of their first association, called the “Polish Flag” (*Bandera Polska*), was to take over the fluvial infrastructure from the departing German occupiers and to facilitate basic river transportation. One year later, as Poland officially acquired its coast and symbolically “married” the Baltic Sea, the association grew into the Polish Shipping League (*Liga Żeglugi Polskiej*) and successfully lobbied the government



Figure 2. Mariusz Zaruski, the founder of the LMiR.
 Edited from: NAC 1-W-649-2.

to build Gdynia. In 1924, the maritime circles changed their official form once again to adjust to the growing set of responsibilities, morphing into the LMiR.⁴⁶ In this new form, the organization was no longer merely a lobby group. Instead, the LMiR attracted popular membership from all social and political strata thanks to its popularization of matters related to the sea. For example, the LMiR’s founder, General Mariusz Zaruski (Figure 2), was one of the first sailing enthusiasts to propagate rudimentary nautical knowledge and terminology in the Polish language.⁴⁷ The LMiR’s aim

was not only to support further development of Poland’s merchant marine and navy, and to raise new generations of sailors to man them, but also to promote the importance of industriousness in business and commerce, which entailed finding new trade partners for the country, colonies in Africa included.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ See Tadeusz Biały, *Liga Morska i Kolonialna 1930-1939* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1983), 11–26.

⁴⁷ Mariusz Zaruski’s personal dossier, I.480.667, Kolekcja Generałów i Osobistości, CAW; Mariusz Zaruski, *Na skrzydłach jachtów* (Lwów: Książnica Atlas, 1933); Mariusz Zaruski, *Współczesna żegluga morska oraz słownik żeglarski* (Warsaw: Arcta, 1920).

⁴⁸ See, for example, Mariusz Zaruski, “Nowy okres,” *Morze*, no. 3–4 (1927): 1–3.



Figure 3. The logo of the Union of Colonial Pioneers. Note the modernist imagery.
Source: Public Domain.

The LMiR became an appropriate platform for Głuchowski and his followers to legitimize the idea of colonial pioneering, which they perceived as a logical extension of

commercial expansion. In February 1928, inaugurating his new alliance with the LMiR, Głuchowski created the Union of Colonial Pioneers (*Związek Pionierów Kolonialnych*, or ZPK) as an autonomous section within the League. (Figure 3) Thirty-four individuals, including Jerzy Chmielewski, Teodor Cybulski, Jan Rozwadowski, and Adam Uziembło, came to the ZPK's foundational meeting, which took place in the conference hall of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and enjoyed tacit state backing.⁴⁹ Consequently, the program of the LMiR, described most generally as advocating “work for the Polish sea,” was expanded to include the objective of Poland's acquiring its “own settlement areas and colonies [*własne tereny i kolonie osadnicze*].”⁵⁰ In order to reflect the creation of the ZPK, the LMiR's official monthly, *Morze*, began to include a special section called *Pionier Kolonialny* (Colonial Pioneer). Moreover, further strengthening the ZPK's position in the institutional mosaic of interwar Poland was the establishment of the allied Polish Station for Tropical Studies (*Polska Stacja Badań Tropikalnych*), which aimed to examine the “exploitation capacities” of “tropical” and “colonial” lands.⁵¹ The Station, with Janusz Makarczyk at its helm, quickly merged with the Research Institute and contributed to the latter's

⁴⁹ “Związek Pionierów Kolonialnych,” *Morze*, no. 3 (1928): 30.

⁵⁰ *Program kolonialny Ligi Morskiej i Rzecznej* (Warsaw: Liga Morska i Rzeczna, 1929), 6.

⁵¹ Janusz Makarczyk, “Kilka uwag u progu działalności,” *Morze*, no. 5 (1928): 26.

increased specialization in the issues of Africa.⁵²

It was the newly found desire for commercial expansion in Africa, which superseded the desire for ethnic and national management of emigration, that contributed to the emergence of the ZPK. In 1931, a leading colonial activist, Mieczysław Fularski, argued that for three years the ZPK had searched for “new areas for unbridled human expansion” while “recognizing the significance of the economic factor, without which all plans in this matter will remain a utopia.” According to him, the ZPK “called for enshrining our colonial-emigration policies foremost in economics, not in population-related foundations, as it has been done so far.”⁵³ In a similar manner, Henryk Tetzlaff (1900–1986), the editor-in-chief of *Morze* in the years 1927–1933 and participant in the ZPK’s foundational meeting, confirmed in an interview from 1973 that economic prerogatives had influenced the emergence of Głuchowski’s colonial circle. Tetzlaff argued that colonial ideas about emigrants serving as commercial links with the outside world “ignited hotter heads [in the LMIR],” which now entertained thoughts of assuming mandates over former German territories.⁵⁴

Furthermore, the increased cultural and economic contact along the Katowice-Warsaw-Gdynia transportation axis likely contributed to the rising popularity of colonial ideas concerning Africa. Katowice, formerly known as Kattowitz, had been an industrial center of the German Empire, exporting Silesian coal and finished products to its colonial possessions around the globe.⁵⁵ Many Polish-speaking Silesians, some of whom probably identified simply as local

⁵² Franciszek Feliks Łyp, *Wysoki płaskowyż Angoli: sprawozdanie kierownika ekspedycji polskiej do Angoli w roku 1929* (Naukowy Instytut Emigracyjny, 1930), ii.

⁵³ Mieczysław Fularski, *Kryzys emigracyjny a polska polityka kolonialna* (Warsaw: Liga Morska i Kolonialna, 1931), 14.

⁵⁴ Ryszard Dobrowolski, “Autoryzowany wywiad z Henrykiem Tetzlaffem, naczelnym redaktorem miesięcznika ‘Morze’ w latach 1927-1933,” *Przegląd Socjologiczny* 27 (1975): 220.

⁵⁵ Janusz Ignaszewski, “Zarys rozwoju Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej na terenie Zagłębia Węglowego,” 1936, I.341.1.525, Wojskowe Biuro Historyczne, CAW WBH.

people, participated in Germany's colonial conquest either as sailors or colonial pioneers. In 1929, the LMiR registered, according to its own estimate, 20,000 individuals who had served the Reich in its African colonies.⁵⁶ It was therefore only appropriate for the ZPK to be incorporated into the LMiR during the latter's general summit in Katowice in October 1928.

It should also be noted that 1928 was, for political reasons, an auspicious year for the LMiR to incorporate the ZPK, or for the ZPK to nest itself within the LMiR. Piłsudski's coup d'état two years earlier marked the break away from a period of relative democratic instability toward a period of stable authoritarianism. Piłsudski's predecessors and political adversaries, including president Stanisław Wojciechowski, did support the LMiK prior to May 1926.⁵⁷ The brittle character of the pre-1926 governments, however, made any ambitious policies difficult to implement: the Emigration Office's "great-power orientation," for example, only took place after the coup.⁵⁸ Moreover, the ideological architect of the "post-May camp," Walery Sławek, encouraged the "elitarization" of the nation through local institutions, ranging from labor unions to fire brigades, which he envisioned as vehicles of social promotion for deserving (and loyal) individuals.⁵⁹ The LMiR, viewed as essentially pro-state, could hope for a special status as one such "elitarist" institutions. Marshal Piłsudski himself expressed an initial aversion toward the fledgling Polish navy, which took a neutral stance during the coup. Admiral Jerzy Świrski (1882–1959), however, who was a leading activist of the LMiR, was able to meet with Piłsudski and

⁵⁶ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁷ "Prezydent Wojciechowski w Gdyni," 1923, MF.245, FNAI; "Dział oficjalny L. M. i R.," *Morze*, no. 2 (1924): 15; Czesław Petelenz, "Memento," *Morze*, no. 1 (1924): 2; "Uchwała Rady Ligi Morskiej i Rzecznej w sprawie umowy handlowej polsko-niemieckiej w dziale żegluga śródlądowej," 1925, I.303.4.4130, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego, CAW WBH.

⁵⁸ Gustaw Załęcki, *Dwie orientacje w polskiej polityce emigracyjnej* (Naukowy Instytut Emigracyjny, 1929); "Zagadnienie emigracji w Polsce. Wywiad z dyrektorem Urzędu Emigracyjnego p. Bolesławem Nakoniecznikoffem," *Wychodźca*, February 22, 1930.

⁵⁹ See Jacek Srokosz, "Elitarystyczne koncepcje Walerego Sławka oraz próby ich realizacji," *Imponderabilia. Biuletyn Piłsudczykowski*, no. 3 (2011): 40–55.

successfully lobby him for greater state support.⁶⁰

Piłsudski could not simply ignore the navy as it was an indispensable component of



Figure 4. The "Dar Pomorza," a Polish sailing ship built with public funds and used for propaganda purposes. Copyright: Piotr Puchalski.

Poland's power. In consequence, in February 1927, the government created the National Fleet Committee (*Komitet Floty Narodowej*) to "coordinate the activities of various institutions, social groups, and persons working to establish the Polish national fleet."⁶¹ The

committee collected money for the

construction of new ships like the "Dar Pomorza" ("Gift of Pomerania") (Figure 4) and disseminated propaganda about the role of the navy in catapulting Poland to great-power status.⁶²

It was also a competitor to the LMiR, however, which envied the former's state subsidies.⁶³ By 1932, in fact, the LMiR's successor liquidated the National Fleet Committee and instituted the Maritime Defense Fund (*Fundusz Obrony Morskiej*, or FOM) in its place.⁶⁴ In the meantime, the competition between the two agencies helped explain the LMiR's welcoming of the ZPK, which expanded its base. The merging of the LMiR and the ZPK, moreover, signaled the belief that a strong fleet was the prerequisite for colonial expansion. Piłsudski himself told Mieczysław Lepecki

⁶⁰ Daniel Duda, Bartłomiej Pączek, and Tomasz Szubrycht, *Oficerowie Wojska Polskiego jako działacze Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej* (Gdynia: Jerzy Pyrchla, 2010), 25–28.

⁶¹ "Ustawa z dnia 16 lutego 1927 r. o Komitecie Floty Narodowej," March 23, 1927, *Dziennik Ustaw*, no. 27/206.

⁶² "Uroczystość poświęcenia fregaty 'Dar Pomorza,'" 1930, MF.136, FNAI.

⁶³ Maria Babnis and Kamila Grzędzińska, "O „Darze Pomorza” i nie tylko : w 85 rocznicę odzyskania przez Polskę dostępu do morza," *Libri Gedanenses*, no. 22 (2004): 32–36.

⁶⁴ "Przemówienie Prezesa Rady Głównej LMK J. Kożuchowskiego nad mogiłą ś.p. gen. G. Orlicz-Dreszera w dniu 20 lipca 1926 r.," *Morze*, no. 9 (1936): 4.

that “the road to colonies is the fleet” and that one could not “acquire or maintain colonies without a fleet.”⁶⁵

Likewise, the opening statement of the first *Pionier Kolonialny* section of *Morze* from March 1928 depicted Poland’s colonial expansion as a consequence of its maritime development and the condition of its survival. It read:

“We march toward the great-power status of Poland with increasing confidence. And then in our path stands the problem of overseas expansion, the problem of securing for our nation areas for unbridled expansion, for creating a second, new Poland – the colonial problem. That question manifests itself differently for us than for other nations, which pursued and pursue a colonial policy. It is not about the avarice-driven imperialism of some nations, nor is it a purely economic question as it is for Holland or Belgium. It is a question that contains a Hamletian ‘to be or not to be,’ determining whether we will be a great nation and a powerful state [*wielki naród, mocarstwowe państwo*].”⁶⁶

In this manner, the need for economic survival, rather than economic avarice, was used as the justification for “overseas expansion,” with the mere *fait accompli* of 5,000,000 Poles living overseas serving as a call to translating that emigration into proper economic power.⁶⁷ Despite this coating of the Polish ambitions in the language of emigration, however, the ZPK’s discourse was fierier than most articles published in *Wychodźca*. The famous traveler Ferdynand Antoni Ossendowski wrote in the same issue of the *Pionier Kolonialny* that the trinity of “emigration,

⁶⁵ Józef Piłsudski quoted in Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, *Pamiętnik adiutanta Marszałka Piłsudskiego* (Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1987), 17.

⁶⁶ “Idźmy za morza!,” *Morze*, no. 3 (1928): 31.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

colonization, and the sea (...) should become the testing ground of the physical and spiritual capacity of the Poles.”⁶⁸

While sounding the trumpet of nationalism, the program drafted in the *Pionier* would soon extend beyond celebrating emigration policies in South America, distinguishing Africa as a destination for economic penetration through colonial pioneering. In October 1928, during its general summit in Katowice, the LMiR incorporated the ZPK fully into its structures, drafted a new “shipping-colonial” (*żeglugowo-kolonialny*) program, and elected Głuchowski its chairman, a function he would fulfill for one year.⁶⁹ As a consequence of the summit, the maritime agenda of the League acquired a stronger colonial connotation. The chairman-elect wrote in *Morze* that Poland’s coast would increase in value once it acquired its “counterpart” coasts overseas. He distinguished, moreover, between “pure-blooded” (*pur sangue*) colonial actions “carried out in African and similar territories” and “active emigration policies” in South America.⁷⁰ Głuchowski suggested that the former type of action would address the Polish state’s commercial imbalance and acquire either official colonies or administrative and financial condominiums co-governed with other states in Africa.⁷¹ As “colonial actions,” Głuchowski proposed, for example, negotiating for a customs union with the French in Cameroon and demanding colonial reparations for Germany’s destruction of the Polish lands during World War I. He also mobilized other institutions and individuals to support his program, in particular the Research Institute and the Emigration Office, as well as former Prussian colonial policemen and soldiers of the French Foreign Legion.⁷²

One contributor to the *Pionier Kolonialny* underlined that “from the dawn of its existence,

⁶⁸ Ferdynand Antoni Ossendowski, “Siła ducha polskiego,” *Morze*, no. 3 (1928): 33.

⁶⁹ Łyp, *Wysoki płaskowyż Angoli*, i–ii; A. Uziembło, “Rewia sił i środków,” *Morze*, no. 12 (1928): 1–2.

⁷⁰ Kazimierz Głuchowski, “Akcja kolonialna Ligi Morskiej i Rzecznej,” *Morze*, no. 12 (1928): 27.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, 27–29.

the Union of Colonial Pioneers emphasized the economic aspect of the colonial question.”⁷³ In fact, the arguments put forward in the special section of *Morze* resembled those made during the Paris Peace Conference ten years earlier. Since Poland had lost its Russian imperial market for finished goods after the Bolshevik takeover, its merchants should designate other countries with weak currencies as destinations for industrial exports and sources of raw material imports. The colonies of Portugal and France, Poland’s allies, would be ideal candidates, especially Cameroon, where Szolc-Rogoziński’s legacy would serve as a useful tool for negotiation. Polish industry, such arguments proceeded, needed trading posts (*domy handlowe* or *faktorie*) in western and southwestern Africa to eliminate the need for Western intermediaries and engage in direct exchange for crucial staples: cotton, coffee, cacao, tobacco.⁷⁴ Since the ZPK called for only limited settlement in Africa, however, it was still South America that preoccupied the minds of most emigration activists in the 1920s. In consequence, *Wychodźca* limited its mentions of Africa to pointing out the continent’s constrained capacity to host emigrants from Poland. In the years 1925–1926, for example, the journal’s correspondent from the Belgian Congo informed readers that only wealthy individuals could establish plantations in that part of Africa in order to sell their produce to local gold mines.⁷⁵

The ZPK considered the Wilsonian international system as a potential facilitator of its economic ambitions in Africa as the question of mandates and their supposedly arbitrary distribution among European powers entered the public debate at the end of the 1920s. In January 1929, the *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny* (IKC), a Sanacja-leaning Kraków-based daily, published an article that reiterated the ZPK’s concept of expansion in Africa and mentioned Szolc-

⁷³ ...ski, “Kolonie a ekspansja gospodarcza,” *Morze*, no. 9 (1928): 26.

⁷⁴ Ibid.; “Znaczenie Afryki z punktu widzenia polskiej ekspansji gospodarczej,” *Morze*, no. 9 (1928): 28–29.

⁷⁵ “Wieści z Konga Belgijskiego w Afryce,” *Wychodźca*, January 10, 1926, 8–9.

Rogoziński's and Beniowski's expeditions as historical precedents. At the same time, in order to argue that the time was now right for Poles to demand colonies in the international forum, the *IKC* cited widespread rumors that a reshuffling of mandates between the great powers was soon to occur and implied that Poland should be at the receiving end of any revision.⁷⁶ Likewise, in August 1929, the English-language *Polish Economist* reprinted these ideas for circulation abroad.⁷⁷ In fact, the Permanent Mandates Commission would frequently be in session in the early 1930s amid the dawn of Iraq's independence and the change in borders between British and French areas in the Middle East. Although the Commission's series of meetings did not result in any transfer of territory from one mandatory power to another, the colonial milieu took the matter of changes in the mandate system seriously.⁷⁸

Thus, as the decade of the 1920s came to a close, members of the colonial milieu engaged in the LMiR. Having gained influence in the Research Institute, they proposed the redirection of colonial pioneering from South America to Africa and addressed perceived discontents of the international system, in particular the distribution of mandates. For the remainder of its existence, the PTE coordinated its efforts with other "emigration and colonial" institutions and occasionally reprinted articles from *Morze*.⁷⁹ While colonial ideas informed both, however, a distinction was made between the PTE's proposed policies for South America and the ZPK's proposed policies for Africa, with the latter mostly excluding massive settlement projects. In this way, it was the

⁷⁶ "Czy Polska ma prawo do zamorskich kolonii," *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, January 5, 1929, 5.

⁷⁷ "Poland's Right to Colonies," *The Polish Economist*, August 1929, 280–82.

⁷⁸ James C. Hales, "Some Legal Aspects of the Mandate System: Sovereignty: Nationality: Termination and Transfer," *Transactions of the Grotius Society*, Problems of Peace and War, Papers Read before the Society in the Year 1937, XXIII (1937): 112–26.

⁷⁹ Kazimierz Drągowski, "Z Delegacji Porozumiewawczej polskich organizacji emigracyjnych, kolonialnych i mniejszościowych," *Wychodźca*, May 25, 1930, 1–3; Wiktor Rosiński, "Z prasy krajowej. Polski problem kolonialny," *Wychodźca*, May 25, 1930, 11–12; St. Kn., "Przed Walnym Zjazdem Delegatów P.T.E.," *Wychodźca*, November 2, 1930, 1–2.

ZPK that turned into the leading incubator of colonial ideas as it contributed to the emergence of the powerful Maritime and Colonial League.

Escaping Peripheral Status



Figure 5. Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer, the charismatic leader of the LMiK until his death in July 1936. Arkady Fiedler described him as follows: *“startlingly handsome, attracted everyone’s attention; the fair sex of every kind, very young and older, adulteress and devotee, fainted from delight at his sight and flew to him like moths.”* Source: NAC 1-W-368.

Behind the rebranding of the LMiR as explicitly “colonial” in name stood General Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer (1889–1936) (Figure 5), a former soldier of the Polish Legions and one of Piłsudski’s favorite officers. Born in an assimilated German Evangelical family, Orlicz-Dreszer played a crucial role during the coup d’état of May 1926 and became a General Inspector of the Army in 1930.⁸⁰ Despite having climbed quickly in the Polish military hierarchy, however, the general brigadier had been sidetracked from political power by the Sanacja’s other “colonels” toward the end of the 1920s. According to his biographer, the historian Przemysław Olstowski, Orlicz-Dreszer criticized the patriotic ethos of the “colonels,”

foreign minister Józef Beck included. He considered the Sanacja’s ideology merely its tool for staying in power, not an effective means of encouraging citizens to engage with the outside world.⁸¹ In Olstowski’s opinion, it was Orlicz-Dreszer’s falling out with the “colonels” that encouraged the general to insert himself into the colonial milieu. While it allowed the general to exert political influence in Poland, his leadership also helped the colonial milieu acquire a serious public image

⁸⁰ “Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer,” n.d., I.480.309, Kolekcja Generałów i Osobistości, CAW WBH.

⁸¹ See Przemysław Olstowski, *Generał Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2000), 314–16.

and spread its message to a wider audience.⁸² Moreover, Olstowski has written that, despite his ethnic heritage, Orlicz-Dreszer was, next to Kazimierz Sosnkowski, one of the most anti-German officers in the Polish Army. His anti-German attitude helped him recognize the importance of the navy and air force in modern warfare, encouraged him to reconcile the “colonels” with the isolated Władysław Sikorski, and made him responsive to the increased revisionist discourse from Germany in the late 1920s and thereafter.⁸³

Whether one agrees or not that Orlicz-Dreszer’s ascendance to power in the LMiR was of his own initiative, it did happen unexpectedly, since the general had made only a few appearances in those circles before. Orlicz-Dreszer was elected chairman of the ZPK’s new executive board on March 16, 1930, with Juliusz Szymoński, a senior figure in the Polish Senate at the time, presiding over the meeting.⁸⁴ In addition, listed among prominent members of the ZPK in March 1930 were Apoloniusz Zarychta, Mieczysław Lepecki, and Teodor Cybulski, all rising figures in the government.⁸⁵ Furthermore, the chairman of the LMiR in the years 1929-1930 was Roman Górecki (1889–1946), like Orlicz-Dreszer a general and former legionary. Górecki was, moreover, president of the BGK (Development Bank), the institution that co-financed the establishment of the Polish “colonies” in South America.⁸⁶ Like the PTE, the LMiR was often intertwined with the government at the personal level, making it difficult to describe the Polish state as one centralized entity. Still, Orlicz-Dreszer’s election as the ZPK’s chairman in March 1930 was a sign of that fragmented state’s growing interest in the colonial affairs of Africa and foreshadowed the intensification of the association’s activities. In the same month, the Union started to publish a

⁸² See *Ibid.*, 334–40.

⁸³ See *Ibid.*, 285–332.

⁸⁴ “Kronika Kolonialna,” *Morze*, no. 4 (1930): 26–27.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ See Duda, Pączek, and Szubrycht, *Oficerowie Wojska Polskiego jako działacze Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 78–79; Wacław Jędrzejewicz, *Wspomnienia* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1993), 206, 212.



Figure 6. Members of the Union of Colonial Pioneers posing in front of a display made for an international maritime exhibition in Antwerp. To the right of Orlicz-Dreszer (fourth from left): Wacław Rosiński, Apoloniusz Zarychta. Source: NAC 1-P-979.

new monthly dedicated exclusively and explicitly to colonial matters, *Sprawy Kolonialne*, and launched the sale of special stamps to inaugurate a “Colonial Fund” (*Fundusz Kolonialny*), soon renamed “Colonial Action Fund” (*Fundusz Akcji Kolonialnej*), which was meant

to finance “colonial actions” in Africa and elsewhere.⁸⁷ In addition, the LMiR soon set up a pavilion at an international maritime exhibition in Antwerp, which informed visitors about Poland’s “pioneering accomplishments in colonizing the wild areas of the world.”⁸⁸ (Figure 6)

According to Olstowski, Orlicz-Dreszer aimed to marry the grandiose ambitions of colonial activists with the efforts of the maritime circles to find new trade partners for Poland.⁸⁹ In fact, in the first article concerning the Polish “colonial problem” published in the *Pionier Kolonialny* after Orlicz-Dreszer’s election, its author, Wiktor Rosiński, seemed to temper the nationalist discourse previously used in the paper. He pointed out the need to take control of “colonial trade,” which constituted a fourth of Poland’s entire commercial exchange.⁹⁰ He underlined, however, that identifying “imperialism or something of the sort” in the ZPK’s actions

⁸⁷ “Kronika Kolonialna,” 27.

⁸⁸ Henryk Tetzlaff, “Polska na międzynarodowej wystawie morsko-kolonialnej w Antwerpii,” *Morze*, no. 7 (1930): 28.

⁸⁹ See Olstowski, *Generał Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer*, 340–48.

⁹⁰ Wiktor Rosiński, “Polski problem kolonialny,” *Morze*, no. 5 (1930): 20.

was like “staring into a void,” and that instead colonial activities resulted from Poland’s vital needs.⁹¹ Likewise, in September 1930, Rosiński wrote that overpopulated European nations pursuing “colonial policies” should not be accused of “imperialism” or “rapacity” (*zaborczość*) since they “stifle economically” while areas in Africa remain incapable of “independent economic or political existence.”⁹² While uttering racist stereotypes about Africans not capable of either governing themselves or creating economically viable units, Rosiński manifested a sense of Polish uniqueness and rhetorically paved the way for Orlicz-Dreszer’s further ascendance in the LMiR.



Figure 7. The emblem of the Maritime and Colonial League. Source: Public Domain.

In late October 1930, a general summit of the LMiR took place in Gdynia, which elected Orlicz-Dreszer chairman of the entire LMiR and adopted a new statute changing the organization’s name to *Liga Morska i Kolonialna* to grant ultimate prominence to its colonial program.⁹³ (Figure 7) Once again, the Polish state was present, even if it did not directly send any of its representatives to Gdynia: the meeting featured the reading of letters from the minister of industry and commerce Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, foreign minister August Zaleski, and director of the Emigration Office Bolesław Nakoniecznikoff. Moreover, the most important members of the colonial milieu such as Gustaw Załęcki and Apoloniusz Zarychta spoke during the same session as the chairman-elect Orlicz-Dreszer, further signaling the growing importance of colonial matters in the organization’s agenda.⁹⁴ Representing the Colonial Commission of the summit, Zarychta recommended to the deputy minister of industry

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Wiktor Rosiński, “W sprawie byłego dominium kolonialnego Niemiec,” *Morze*, no. 9 (1930): 18.

⁹³ Henryk Tetzlaff, “Po doniosłych uchwałach zjazdu gdyńskiego,” *Morze*, no. 11 (1930): 4–5.

⁹⁴ “III Walny Zjazd Delegatów w Gdyni,” *Morze*, no. 11 (1930): 21.

and commerce that “as soon as possible the Polish state should undertake colonial policies, the realization of which is one of the most important conditions of its independent economic life” and suggested that “conquest of colonial areas” can only take place through economic means. Serving as a blueprint for the Polish government’s future colonial policies, Zarychta’s recommendations included increasing colonial propaganda, maintaining a register of Polish colonial experts, encouraging Polish companies to invest in African colonies, establishing contact with foreign colonial merchants, and creating colonial departments at several institutions of higher learning.⁹⁵

The program of the new LMiK did not call specifically for “colonies,” but for “areas [tereny] for the unbridled expansion of the many thousands of Polish citizens (...), connecting them economically to the State, forcing them to further work for the Nation, as opposed to working for foreign nations and states.”⁹⁶ By 1934, a LMiK propaganda publication specified three types of “colonies” to be acquired. The first was “an area in a non-European land, not suitable for white colonization, but only for economic exploitation, without a strong local government, sparsely populated with natives.” The second was “an area where white colonization is possible and takes the form of permanent emigration, affecting the [local] administration, culture, and economy to an ever-increasing degree and adapting [local] economic life to the needs of the metropole.” Finally, the third type was a “country possessing a certain local government, functioning under a protectorate and represented by the metropole and adapting its economic life to the needs of the metropole.”⁹⁷

Orlicz-Dreszer’s own writing, however, expressed less specificity regarding the shape of

⁹⁵ Ibid., 23.

⁹⁶ Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer, *Program Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej* (Warsaw: Liga Morska i Kolonialna, 1932), 6.

⁹⁷ Kazimierz Gleyden-Zieleniewski, ed., “Polska idea kolonialna,” in *Od morza na ocean, od wybrzeża do kolonii: dzieje - myśli - fakty* (Warsaw: Liga Morska i Kolonialna, 1934), 158.

Poland's future "colonies." For the LMiK's first chairman, the development of economic connections between Poland and its diaspora was the prerequisite of any colonial policies. The general lamented the "emotional-political direction" of Polish patriotism, which had been a "lever and foundation for the program of military fight" against partitioning powers but delayed the program of economic betterment.⁹⁸ In his opinion, Romanticism had unfortunately trumped Positivism under the partitions and, in independent Poland, Polish society still expressed reluctance to carry out "organic work," which instead became the domain of "materialist" nations such as Italy, Britain, and France.⁹⁹ Orlicz-Dreszer called upon Polish entrepreneurs to start businesses in Poland to supply and support their brothers in the diaspora. His ultimate goal for his countrymen, however, was to set out for "the multitude of lands still uninhabited by Poles" as producers, intermediaries, and consumers acting at the service of "world-wide Poland" [*Polska światowa*]. Ironically, the leader of the LMiK did not refrain from appealing to his countrymen in "emotional-political" terms, condemning them for their economic "seasickness" and asking the maritime pantheon to forgive them for their historic idleness in the Baltic region.¹⁰⁰ In fact, an international bureau was established under the auspices of the LMiK to encourage diaspora youth to become economic agents of their homeland, which was in line with the concept of a "world-wide Poland" and with the Sanacja's state-centered approach.¹⁰¹

At the same time, Orlicz-Dreszer also offered deeper insights into the Polish condition in the interwar period. Despite his dream of a "world-wide Poland" emerging out of organic work, the general did not think that Poland was anywhere close to being a great power (*mocarstwo*). In

⁹⁸ Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer, "Patriotyzm gospodarczy," in *Na nowe drogi* (Warsaw: Liga Morska i Kolonialna, 1935), 5–6.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14–15.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 19; Jerzy Smoleński, *Pomorze. Poland's Bastion on the Baltic* (Poznań: R. Wegner, 1932), 9–11.

¹⁰¹ *Biuro łączności gospodarczej z młodzieżą polską zagranicą* (Liga Morska i Kolonialna, 1932), DŻS VA 1a, BN.

particular, the chairman pointed to the rampant unemployment in the countryside, the dearth of domestic capital, and the fact that much of Poland's industry was financed from abroad as factors determining its low international status. In one of his essays published posthumously, Orlicz-Dreszer stated that: "We learned from the moment we acquired independence to say the term 'great power' in all declensions [different forms of a noun], delighting in its sound as little children that joyfully repeat a word whose meaning they do not understand."¹⁰² For him, a state where most citizens suffered from economic and cultural deprivation worse than in Sweden or Czechoslovakia could hardly call itself a great power. He pointed out that:

"Overpopulation and a backward economy are the rule in the countryside, where the Pole employs his most basic [farming] skills. The terrifying number and even more terrifying growth of midget (*karłowaty*) households, where no less than a third of the country lives (...): that is the fate of our nation's nurturers despite the fact that our soil had once been the breadbasket of Europe."¹⁰³

According to the general, however, not all of this backwardness was the fault of the economically idle Polish mind, however, but also a product of western European capitalist exploitation:

"It is foreign capital that rules [our] cities and that has set up pumps to suck out usurer's profits from [our] industrial enterprises for use abroad. Poland is that capital's most alienated and forgettable colony, subject to an economics of devastation without scruples or pangs of conscience. What we have left [in Poland] are the basic elements that comprise the basis of our production – coal, petroleum products, electricity – which are still influenced by foreign and most often hostile factors. (...) The third branch of our national economy, trade, is also in foreign hands: its export-import department is

¹⁰² Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer, "W poszukiwaniu idei," *Morze*, no. 1 (1937): 4.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 5.

under the foreign domination of cartels, corporations, banks, and other international associations ‘rummaging’ (*buszujący*) in our territory (...).”¹⁰⁴

This startling statement, which recalls the language used at the time to express the Jewish “exploitation” of the country, reflected Orlicz-Dreszer’s belief that not only Africa but Poland itself was a “colony” that was economically exploited at the hands of western Europeans. In his opinion, therefore, Poland’s colonial expansion abroad, namely commercial expansion in Africa, was ironically its means of escaping colonial subjugation at home.



Figure 8. The cult photograph of Orlicz-Dreszer disseminated after his death. Note the imagery of modernity. Source: *Morze*, no. 9 (1936).

Orlicz-Dreszer seemed to care little that Polish “colonial actions,” once successfully advanced, might one day bring a similar economic exploitation to Africa. Most importantly, however, the general was concerned with ushering in a Polish maritime modernity, which was implicit in the contemporary nationalist discourse of the LMiK. In his posthumous eulogy to Orlicz-Dreszer, one of the leading colonial activists

and a Piłsudskiite member of the PSL-Piast, Jan Dębski (1889–1976),¹⁰⁵ underlined that, according to the late chairman, the individual was essential for colonial expansion, since trade did not “necessarily follow the flag but, above all, [it was] the man, the colonist, the merchant living in foreign lands, the planter, the industrialist, and the Polish aviator, who glorifies the fruit of Polish

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Jan Sałkowski, “Jan Dębski /1889 - 1976/” (*Roczniki Dziejów Ruchu Ludowego*, 1978 1977), Rps Ossol.15354/II, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich.

engineers and workers by flying a Polish aircraft.”¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, according to Michał Pankiewicz, Orlicz-Dreszer dreamed about a “new, pioneering type of a Pole, a conqueror of seas and oceans, mosquitoes and malaria; he dreamed about a Pole building bridges, taming waterfalls, and carrying the banner of Poland’s glory high and everywhere.”¹⁰⁷ (Figure 8)

Before his unexpected death in July 1936, Orlicz-Dreszer managed to coat colonial ambitions in this type of language of maritime modernity. Moreover, thanks to its broad range of aims, the LMiK became the government’s proxy for all things related to the sea. In a letter to the Secretary of State, the U.S. ambassador to Poland John Cudahy wrote about the LMiK’s “endeavor to acquaint and familiarize the Polish people as a nation with the importance to the state of the so-called sea problem.”¹⁰⁸ Indeed, in order to instill a sense of maritime modernity stemming from Poland’s access to the Baltic, the LMiK performed multiple tasks, ranging from erecting functional and representative buildings along the coast to making children’s toys in the shape of waves and sails to hosting competitions for rowdy shanties.¹⁰⁹ In the 1920s, the agencies and partnerships that occupied themselves with the channeling of emigration to South America as a means of managing “surplus” Polish-Catholic populations enjoyed a larger or smaller degree of state support but none as great as the LMiK.

¹⁰⁶ Jan Dębski, “Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer,” *Morze*, no. 9 (1936): 7.

¹⁰⁷ Michał Pankiewicz, “Niezlomny pionier Polski kolonialnej,” *Morze*, no. 9 (1936): 17.

¹⁰⁸ “John Cudahy to the Secretary of State,” April 3, 1935, 1–2, RG 59 860C.43, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

¹⁰⁹ “Projekt Pawilonu Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej na Targach Gdynskich,” 1936, 93/682/1076, Komisariat Rządu w Gdyni, APG (Gdynia); Franciszek Sokół, “The Commissariat of Gdynia to the LMiK,” September 13, 1934, 93/799/84, Urząd Morski w Gdyni, APG (Gdynia); Walenty Czyżycki and Stanisław Gabriel, *Nasze morze w zabawkach* (Warsaw: Liga Morska i Kolonialna, 1938); Janusz Popławski and Olgierd Straszyński, *Dziewczyna zakochana w morzu* (ODEON, n.d.), 33-P-4694, Zbiór nagrań dźwiękowych, NAC; Janusz Popławski and Olgierd Straszyński, *W dalekim porcie* (ODEON, n.d.), 33-P-4709, Zbiór nagrań dźwiękowych, NAC.

In fact, the LMiK served the state in multiple ways, one of which was the collection of money for maritime projects at parties “during which participants will find sufficient entertainment and pleasure without perceiving their contribution as a necessity or burden.”¹¹⁰ (Figure 9) Most of the funds acquired in this fashion went to the Maritime Defense Fund (FOM), thanks to which the Polish government was able to purchase the famous submarine ORP “Orzeł” in the late 1930s.¹¹¹ Starting in June 1932 the LMiK also campaigned for a more effective system of inland waterways



Figure 9. Guests attending a charity ball organized by the Maritime and Colonial League. Source: NAC 1-P-2679-1.

that would decrease the domination of German cargo companies in Poland.¹¹² In addition, the LMiK was an asset to the government as an entity surpassing partisan politics and bringing together patriots of all social strata.¹¹³ In consequence, as it gained supporters of diverse political persuasions, the LMiK was permitted it to establish clubs in public schools, fire brigades, etc.¹¹⁴ (Figure 10) The enrolling of public servants and soldiers, conducted under public pressure in many instances, contributed to its membership counting almost a million souls at the beginning of 1939.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ “Protokół Walnego Zebrania Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej Oddziału w Gnieźnie,” April 2, 1933, 2, I.391.49, Organizacje Paramilitarne, CAW WBH.

¹¹¹ Biały, *Liga Morska i Kolonialna 1930-1939*, 139–45.

¹¹² “Uchwały z zakresu żeglugi śródlądowej,” June 1932, 2/8/6/89-13, Akta Grupowe 1932-1939, Prezydium Rady Ministrów w Warszawie, AAN.

¹¹³ “LMiK to the mayor of Gniezno,” December 1934, I.391.49, Organizacje Paramilitarne, CAW WBH.

¹¹⁴ Biały, *Liga Morska i Kolonialna 1930-1939*, 32–54; Olstowski, *Generał Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer*, 338; Duda, Pączek, and Szubrycht, *Oficerowie Wojska Polskiego jako działacze Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 21–24.

¹¹⁵ “Sprawozdanie kwartalne z życia Polskich Związków i Stowarzyszeń Społecznych za I kwartał 1934 r.,” n.d., 37, 2/1182/4, Urząd Wojewódzki w Wilnie, AAN; Tadeusz Biały, *Z tradycji Ligi Morskiej i Rzemieślniczej* (Gdańsk: Korab, 2002), 9.



Figure 10. Members of an LMiK school club in Skomielna-Biała (1937). The LMiK's propaganda penetrated public schools. Source: NAC 1-N-1752.

Enjoying state support, the LMiK inserted elements related to trade with Africa into its maritime propaganda. In Gniezno, for instance, its local cell hosted a competition for the prettiest shop window decorations that would simultaneously promote the development of the Polish

merchant fleet, the expansion of Gdynia, and the acquisition of colonies.¹¹⁶ Moreover, in order to create the impression that colonial ambitions had long been in the mainstream of Polish thought, the LMiK's leading propagandist, Stanisław Zieliński (1880–1936), worked to depict multiple historical figures like the geologist in Peru, Ignacy Domeyko, or the naturalist in Siberia, Benedykt Dybowski, as Poland's historical colonial pioneers.¹¹⁷ Likewise, in December 1932, the LMiK arranged a series of academic lectures to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Stefan Szolc-Rogoziński's journey to Cameroon, during which it was suggested that his ship, *Łucja Małgorzata*, flew the municipal flag of Warsaw only because a Polish state did not exist at the time.¹¹⁸ It was thanks to the inscribing of this more colonial propaganda in the LMiK's broader program concerned with maritime modernity that Orlicz-Dreszer was able to acquire the support of the Polish government for his plans of expansion in Africa.

¹¹⁶ "Regulamin Konkursu na dekoracje okien wystawowych PF.Kupców m. Gniezna z okazji 'Święta Morza,'" 1934, I.391.49, Organizacje Paramilitarne, CAW WBH.

¹¹⁷ "Stanisław Zieliński to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," September 7, 1932, 1, 2/322/9887, MSZ, AAN.

¹¹⁸ "50-lecie wyprawy polskiej do Kamerunu. Uroczysta akademii w Warszawie," *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, December 10, 1932, 7.

United for Africa

The LMiK's colonial propaganda directed toward the government also appealed to the latter's preexisting geopolitical interest in Africa. One of the first official Polish encounters with colonial Africa occurred during the Riff War (1921–1926), a conflict that pitted the declining Spanish Empire against the indigenous Berbers native to the mountainous part of its protectorate of northern Morocco.¹¹⁹ In September 1923, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw received a request from Abd el-Krim, the military and spiritual leader of the self-proclaimed Republic of the Riff, asking for Poland's recognition of his state-like entity.¹²⁰ It was decided that Warsaw would not honor the Riffian request, however, in order to preserve good Polish-Spanish relations.¹²¹ In addition, the government likely understood that communist sympathies played a role in the uprising. Ferdynand Ossendowski considered the conflict not a typical anti-colonial revolt but a Soviet-inspired "Pan-Islamic uprising of international significance" that, together with socialism and anti-Christianity, could spread to Egypt, Persia, Turkey, and India.¹²² Still, Warsaw maintained interest in Morocco. In 1924, the semi-official newspaper *Polska Zbrojna* dispatched the ubiquitous Mieczysław Lepecki as a correspondent to this part of the Maghreb.¹²³ In 1926, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Brühl Palace noticed the potential for Morocco's conflicts to affect Poland's growing economic interests and emigration prospects in Africa.¹²⁴ In consequence,

¹¹⁹ See, for example, Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace: Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford University Press, 2002); Walter Harris, *France, Spain and the Rif* (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1927); Pablo La Porte, "'Rien à Ajouter': The League of Nations and the Rif War (1921–1926)," *European History Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 66–87.

¹²⁰ "Agent-General of the Government of the Riff to the Polish Legation in London," August 22, 1923, 2/503/355, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

¹²¹ "Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Polish Legation in London regarding the Riff," September 14, 1923, 2/503/355, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

¹²² Ferdynand Antoni Ossendowski, *Wśród Czarnych* (Lwów: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1927), 239.

¹²³ Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, *U wrót tajemniczego Maghrebu* (Warsaw: Księgarnia Biblioteki Dzieł Wyborowych, 1928).

¹²⁴ "P/II 21.129/26," June 1926, 26, 2/503/184, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

Polish diplomats and military intelligence filed reports concerning the Moroccan-Algerian borderland into the 1930s,¹²⁵ while the LMiK wished to supplement existing local settlements of former Polish soldiers of the French Foreign Legion with pioneers.¹²⁶

Notwithstanding the interest in the Maghreb, it was not until the rise of the ZPK in the late 1920s that Polish officials took actions to examine economic and emigration possibilities in sub-Saharan Africa. Toward the end of the decade, Tomasz Zan (1902–1989), an engineer from an aristocratic family, was entrusted by the Brühl Palace with a colonial mission to Africa. He was to travel to Cameroon as an unofficial emissary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to persuade German and Austrian citizens still living there to accept Polish passports instead. Supposedly Warsaw believed that such repatriation would have strengthened its case to receive a mandate over that territory.¹²⁷ Although, due to financial difficulties, the mission never took place in that form, Zan still left for Africa in August 1927 as an unofficial operative of the Polish government, using a passport issued under the false name of Michał Wando, with Wando meaning “hawk” in Lithuanian, so that “nobody would connect me to the LMiK or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.”¹²⁸ After a brief sojourn in the Belgian Congo, the Polish agent traveled through Cameroon, Togo, and Angola to examine local living conditions in anticipation of the LMiR’s “colonial actions.”¹²⁹ Experiencing unhealthy climate and racial segregation in Africa, however, Zan reported to Warsaw that whites could live in Africa only as administrators and that, therefore, mass economic

¹²⁵ Witold Obrębski, “Cunsulate in Marseille to the Embassy in Paris,” November 21, 1933, 2/464/1/6, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN; Jerzy Błeszyński, “Wspólne dowództwo wojskowe na pograniczu południowym Algieru i Maroka,” February 14, 1930, I.303.4.7570, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego, CAW WBH.

¹²⁶ “Cunsulate in Marseille to the LMiK,” April 19, 1932, 2/464/3/335, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

¹²⁷ Wiśniewski and Zan, *Ostatni z rodu*, 71–72.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 73. Note that Zan made a mistake: the LMiR had not yet evolved into the LMiK.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 75–77.

emigration was not possible.¹³⁰

Zan's mission to Africa was an early example of cooperation between the Polish government and the LMiR in colonial matters. In 1929 a note from an official at the Department of International Organizations of the foreign ministry suggested that Poland's colonial acquisition was only a distant possibility, however:

“Under the right political circumstances Poland might in the future attempt to obtain a mandate. Before it happens, however, international opinion must be appropriately prepared and made aware of the completed political and economic development of Poland itself, of the completion of all tasks related to the creation of a dynamic state administration, of the solution of nationality problems, of the assurance of optimal conditions for work in Polish trade and industry, and, finally, of the successful regulation of state finances, which would allow for significant financial and investment efforts that administering a colony will entail.”¹³¹

In contrast to the LMiK, officials at the ministry initially believed that colonial acquisition was not a road to modernity but a reward that would come after its implementation: Poland first needed to develop industrially in order to invest in and draw profits from Africa. Still, the colonial milieu continued to look for ways to shape Polish foreign policy, with colonial-minded members of the Senate passing a series of three resolutions that asked the government to designate special funds in the state budget for colonial initiatives.¹³² Moreover, non-incidentally the LMiK's foundational summit in Gdynia occurred amid German calls for the restitution of the Reich's former colonies,

¹³⁰ Ibid., 78.

¹³¹ Dębicki, “Opinia Wydziału P.I.,” 1929, 2/322/9579, MSZ, AAN.

¹³² Tadeusz Gwiazdoski, “G.M. SMr. 655/29 10.IV 5502 uzyskania kolonii dla Polski,” August 1929, 2/322/9579, MSZ, AAN.

for example Cameroon, in the form of mandates.¹³³ Still, the LMiK's lobbying and penetration of the foreign ministry at the level of personnel produced only moderate results. After studying the issue, the Polish delegation to Geneva determined that gossip about the redistribution of mandates did not have any grounds in reality and had most likely resulted from Italian and German wishful thinking.¹³⁴

In 1931, however, Polish diplomats reexamined the issue. According to a message sent to his superiors in Warsaw, Zbigniew Skokowski from the Polish embassy in London had approached Bronisław Malinowski, a famous anthropologist active in Britain, in order to predict the potential reaction of British colonial circles to the "possibility of developing our emigration policy."¹³⁵ Skokowski's questions for Malinowski concerned potential British attitudes toward Poland after its hypothetical receiving of economic concessions, emigration outlets, or even colonial mandates in Africa. Malinowski drafted his answers for Skokowski after speaking to Frederick Lugard, the British member of the Permanent Mandates Commission, and to one of Lugard's associates. Consequently, the anthropologist suggested that Britain, due to its signature preoccupation with preserving the world's balance of power, would likely respond negatively to any major privileges granted to Poles in French or Portuguese territory, especially to those of political nature.¹³⁶

Despite the fleeting presence of Africa in Polish consular correspondence, the Polish government did not formulate colonial policies toward the continent until after it underwent a major reconstruction. In June 1932, it was the failure of the Emigration Office to properly control

¹³³ See, for example, Jan Rozwadowski, "Przegląd kolonialny," *Morze*, no. 5 (1930): 29.

¹³⁴ Tadeusz Gwiazdoski, "Legation to the League of Nations to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," April 8, 1930, 2/322/9579, MSZ, AAN.

¹³⁵ "Zbigniew Skokowski to the Ministry of Labor and Social Assistance," February 20, 1931, 1, 2/503/891, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2–5.

the Polish project in Peru that, in combination with financial considerations stemming from the Great Depression, persuaded the government to liquidate that institution and to transfer its responsibilities to the newly created Emigration Division at the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Likewise, the PTE lost its state subsidies and was forced to disband for the same reasons.¹³⁷ As a result of this reconstruction, Wiktor Drymmer (1896–1975), a former military intelligence officer and *eminence grise* of the Brühl Palace because of his double appointment as director of the Consular Department and director of the Personal Department, emerged as the most influential government official in matters of emigration and colonial expansion.¹³⁸ In Drymmer's own words, the streamlining of the emigration apparatus was necessary because foreign emigration agencies "treated Poland like their colony" and "groped [prospective emigrants] like cattle at the market," while domestic institutions overlapped with the state in their functions and "increased the costs and introduced chaos."¹³⁹ At the same time, the creation of the Emigration Division at the Consular Department also signaled the government's recognition that emigration was a dimension of foreign policy.¹⁴⁰

Still, the internal structure of the Emigration Division, placed under the control of none other than Apoloniusz Zarychta, suggested that Drymmer and his subordinates began to distinguish the more commercially oriented colonial pioneering from the more demographically oriented channeling of emigration. In fact, the new entity consisted of four sections (*referaty*): Studies

¹³⁷ Wiktor Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce: wspomnienia żołnierza i państwowca z lat 1914-1947* (Kraków: Wingert, 2014), 166; Jerzy Mazurek, *Kraj a emigracja: ruch ludowy wobec wychodźstwa chłopskiego do krajów Ameryki Łacińskiej (do 1939 roku)* (Warsaw: Biblioteka Iberyjska, 2006), 154–55; Krzysztof Szczepanik, "Struktury organizacyjne MSZ w latach 1918-1945. Centrala i placówki," in *Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych II Rzeczypospolitej: organizacja, polityka, ministrowie*, ed. Piotr Długołęcki and Krzysztof Szczepanik (Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wydziału Humanistycznego Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego "Minerwa," 2014), 38.

¹³⁸ Juliusz Łukasiewicz, "Wiktor Tomir (Tomek) Drymmer. Szkic biograficzny," in *W służbie Polsce: wspomnienia żołnierza i państwowca z lat 1914-1947*, by Wiktor Drymmer (Kraków: Wingert, 2014), 11–28.

¹³⁹ Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce*, 186–89.

¹⁴⁰ See Mazurek, *Kraj a emigracja*, 154–55.

Section, Migration Section, Settlement Section, and Colonial Section. The first section studied the possibilities of emigration to particular countries around the world. The aim of the second was to work out the general principles of the Polish government's emigration program. In turn, the Settlement Section recruited and trained people for particular emigration projects. Finally, the Colonial Section was supposed to establish economic and demographic reasons that justified Poland's colonial expansion and its position toward colonial matters more broadly, and to select territories where that expansion could occur.¹⁴¹ While this division into sections did not separate



Figure 11. Map showing the former German colonies in West Africa, including Cameroon and Togo. Edited from: Hydrographic Office of the U.S. Navy (Public Domain).

colonial pioneering from the channeling of emigration explicitly, the Polish government soon drafted a program similar to Orlicz-Dreszer's that essentially confirmed that a separation of this sort was indeed taking place.

By 1933, Poland's

Parliament officially called the

Brühl Palace to develop a colonial program for Africa. On February 28, 1933, the upper house adopted the following resolution: "The Senate recognizes Poland's burning need for colonies and calls the government to present Poland's request for a colonial mandate [deemed] appropriate when the question of redistribution of colonial mandates becomes relevant in the international

¹⁴¹ Wiktor Drymmer, "Nr D.D.K. 41/544/37," February 18, 1937, 2/504/5/57, Konsulat Generalny RP w Londynie, AAN.

forum.”¹⁴² It is worth noting that, according to the authors of the resolution, Maksymilian Thullie and Juliusz Makarewicz, Poland’s colonial request was not to emerge independently, but only once other powers discerned the possibility of changes to the mandate system. About the same time, in preparation for such an occurrence, the chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Sejm, Prince Radziwiłł, expressed his support for the theory of Poland’s right to colonial succession after the German Empire.¹⁴³ In April 1933, in response to the Senate resolution, Apoloniusz Zarychta asked the embassy in London to “collect and evaluate materials pertaining to the former German colonies [Figure 11] currently under the rule of Great Britain”: the nature of their administration, budget, climate conditions, and demographics.¹⁴⁴ By October 1933, moreover, an LMiK circle was established at the Brühl Palace, counting seventy officials.¹⁴⁵

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its official view two months later in the “report of activities in emigration and colonial affairs.” The document disparaged the “ossified colonial system” established centuries prior, described as political “par excellence” and stemming from “imperialist and prestige-based elements.”¹⁴⁶ It was remarked that nations with small populations and limited economic resources could not direct the economies of their colonies properly. The author demonstrated, moreover, that Europe was much more densely populated than Africa, Australia, and South America, which suggested that population movements should flow toward the latter parts of the world.¹⁴⁷ At the same time, the argument continued, it was avaricious

¹⁴² Quoted in Kazimierz Jeziorański, “Kolonie mandatowe a Polska,” *Sprawy Morskie i Kolonialne*, no. 2 (1935): 40.

¹⁴³ Gilbert Maroger, *L’Europe et la question coloniale: Revendications coloniales allemandes, aspirations coloniales polonaises* (Librairie du reueil Sirey, 1938), 250.

¹⁴⁴ Apoloniusz Zarychta, “Pismo naczelnika Wydziału Polityki Emigracyjnej do ambasady w Londynie o polskich aspiracjach kolonialnych,” April 27, 1933, 270, doc. 121, PDD 1933.

¹⁴⁵ “Oddział Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej przy MSZ,” October 19, 1933, 2/504/5/60, Konsulat Generalny RP w Londynie, AAN.

¹⁴⁶ “Sprawozdanie MSZ: działalność w sprawach kolonialnych i emigracyjnych (fragmenty),” 835.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

Westerners who promoted the false idea that Africa, with its harsh climate, could receive only a limited number of white settlers.¹⁴⁸ The reason for Poland's projected colonial expansion was only partly demographic, as the dearth of domestic capital "dictate[s] the unquestionable need for the state to search for free [*wolny*] territories of colonial character, where Polish economic and commercial exploitation should take place and to which the emigration of Polish specialists should be channeled."¹⁴⁹ In this manner, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs distinguished between the channeling of emigration and an economic type of colonial pioneering, shifting Poland's colonial ambitions in the direction of acquiring "areas possessing both plantation-settler [*osadniczo-plantacyjny*] and exploitation-economic [*eksploatacyjno-gospodarczy*] capacities."¹⁵⁰

Most importantly, echoing Orlicz-Dreszer, the report also argued that Poland's industry was stuck in a "vicious circle," deprived of "its own sources of raw materials and overseas maritime transportation."¹⁵¹ Poland paid large sums ("cartel prices") to Western intermediaries to acquire raw materials for its industry, which resulted in rising prices of everyday items imported to Poland from faraway countries and stagnating domestic consumption. In consequence, the report named the establishment of trading posts and plantations as a panacea for the country's retarded industrial development.¹⁵² In the first place, the building of an appropriate "commercial-financial apparatus" at home was recommended, as was the negotiation of concessions and condominiums with colonial empires. Nevertheless, the ultimate objective of acquiring political colonies was made entirely contingent upon the "evolution" of the colonial system.¹⁵³ Noticing promise in Wilsonian internationalism, the Brühl Palace suggested that one way of taking

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 836.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 833.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 834.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 838.

advantage of the “elasticity of the mandate system, which allowed a transfer of mandatory power” was to locate capital and to acquire concessions in selected mandates in order to strengthen Poland’s claims to those territories.¹⁵⁴

The handful of Polish experts advising the government did not consider the transfer of mandatory power likely, however. Jerzy Zajączkowski argued, for example, that Woodrow Wilson’s and Jan Smuts’s initial concepts of internationalized administration over the mandates had yielded to the idea of a “sacred trust”: mandatory rights and responsibilities delegated to powers capable of civilizing mission.¹⁵⁵ It was the imperial powers of the Entente that had surrendered certain aspects of their sovereignty over the mandates to the League of Nations through their ratification of Article 22 of the Covenant, not the other way around. Otherwise, the British and French mandatory authority over former German and Ottoman territories, established while the League of Nations was still in the making, was enshrined in international law with retroactive effect (*ex post facto*).¹⁵⁶ Zajączkowski implied that mandatory powers over territories such as Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Togoland, and Cameroon could only be transferred to another state on the basis of a bilateral agreement. In 1933, another legal expert, Julian Makowski from the University of Warsaw, echoed many of Zajączkowski’s points.¹⁵⁷

Colonial Expansion and Catholic Missions

By 1933, despite opinions that questioned whether the Wilsonian international system would facilitate it, the Brühl Palace was not dissuaded from promoting colonial expansion in Africa defined in economic terms. It was implied that Polish Catholics, as the majority group which

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 839.

¹⁵⁵ Jerzy Stanisław Zajączkowski, “Zagadnienie konstrukcji prawnej terytoriów mandatowych w świetle teorii prawa narodów,” *Kwartalnik Naukowego Instytutu Emigracyjnego i Kolonialnego* 6, no. 1 (1931): 133–37.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 138–46.

¹⁵⁷ Julian Makowski, *La Nature juridique des Mandats B et C* (Paris: A. Pedone, 1933), 14–15.

the colonial milieu considered as defining the “Polish” nation, would carry out the “colonial actions.” At the same time, however, although the emergence of the ZPK coincided with the intensification of missionary efforts worldwide, the Catholic Church entertained its own ideas about expansion in Africa. In the 1920s, the spread of Western liberalism and the rise of the Soviet Union contributed to the popularity of anti-colonial and communist ideas across Asia and Africa, which prompted the Catholic Church to offer alternatives to secular ideologies.¹⁵⁸ Benedict XV’s pastoral letter *Maximum illud* (1919) and Pius XI’s encyclical *Rerum ecclesiae* (1926) announced the embrace of non-European cultural approaches to Catholicism, including a greater role for native clergymen, and called for laymen to join clerics as missionaries and Catholic “maximalists.”¹⁵⁹ Meanwhile, the Catholic missionary administration was restructured into the Missionary Union of Priests and Religious.¹⁶⁰ In the socioeconomic realm, the Catholic corporatist model promised to curb the abuses of capitalism through the underlining of human dignity and the promise of mediation between workers and employers.¹⁶¹

The newly united Polish Church was called to participate in carrying out this internationalist Catholic program in the context of the dual communist-liberal danger and growing Protestant competition in Africa. In early 1927, the diocese of Poznań hosted the International Academic Missionary Congress, with participants expressing their excitement about Slavs contributing to overseas missionary efforts and calling on them to support the signature Polish

¹⁵⁸ See Giuliana Chamedes, *A Twentieth-Century Crusade: The Vatican’s Battle to Remake Christian Europe* (Harvard University Press, 2019); James Chappel, *Catholic Modern: The Challenge of Totalitarianism and the Remaking of the Church* (Harvard University Press, 2018).

¹⁵⁹ See James Kroeger, “Papal Mission Wisdom: Five Mission Encyclicals,” in *A Century of Catholic Mission: Roman Catholic Missiology 1910 to the Present*, ed. Stephen B. Bevans (Regnum Books International, 2013), 93–100; John Francis Pollard, *The Papacy in the Age of Totalitarianism, 1914–1958* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 113–16, 163–70.

¹⁶⁰ See Janusz Dyl, *Pallotyni w Polsce w latach 1907–1947* (Lublin: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, 2001), 355; Wiesław Mysłek, *Kościół katolicki w Polsce w latach 1918–1939: zarys historyczny* (Książka i Wiedza, 1966), 539.

¹⁶¹ See Howard J. Wiarda, *Corporatism and Comparative Politics: The Other Great Ism* (M.E. Sharpe, 1996).

mission at Broken Hill, Northern Rhodesia (Figure 12).¹⁶² In response, Polish Catholic publications searched for the right way to depict Polish missionary activities. In May 1928, for example, Jerzy Smoleński of the Jagiellonian University, writing in the Catholic monthly *Misje Katolickie*, justified spreading the Gospel among peoples whose alleged inferiority “one could only partly reduce to racial differences.” Instead, according to him, it was the “influence of the environment” that played “an enormous role” in the inferiority of Africans.¹⁶³ Smoleński underlined that “the world economy arrives in the farthest ends of the globe” ruled from London and Washington, with European culture spreading alongside technology. Smoleński warned, however, against Catholic indifference to this seemingly inevitable dissemination of European culture, pointing out that “pagan” powers such as Japan easily adopted Western technology without surrendering their own beliefs.¹⁶⁴

Responding to objections to establishing Polish missions in Africa, including the fact that Poland did not possess any colonies and could invest only meager sums overseas, Smoleński did not limit himself to invoking the legend of Poland as an *antemurale Christianitatis*. Instead, the academic married the Romantic idea of Polish-African brotherhood to internationalist Catholic prerogatives. He pointed out that apparent disadvantages such as the absence of colonies could be perceived as predispositions to successful missionizing:

“[Western] missions are often received with mistrust of the community in which they operate because it views them as the vanguard of rapacious foreign aims. By nature, no

¹⁶² See Ryszard Dobrowolski, “Obraz Afryki w świetle katolickich czasopism misyjnych i publicystyki w Polsce lat międzywojennych,” *Przegląd Socjologiczny* 27 (1975): 181–83; Leszek Wilczyński, “Międzynarodowy Akademicki Kongres Misyjny w Poznaniu (28 IX - 2 X 1927),” *Annales Missiologici Posnanienses*, no. 15 (2007): 251–78.

¹⁶³ Jerzy Smoleński, “Polska wobec dzisiejszych warunków światowej akcji misyjnej,” *Misje Katolickie* 47, no. 5 (1928): 199–200.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 200–201.

similar suspicion can loom over Polish missions. Poland does not have political colonies and, conversely, does not have imperialist territorial aims connected to colonial policies. This is why it is easier for the Polish missions to gain the trust of the local population, which is so important for effective action.”¹⁶⁵

He added that, in contrast to the British, his countrymen did not express any “racial-national exclusivity” that would “segregate them from the indigenous people in the colonies.”¹⁶⁶ Just as the ZPK claimed that politically disinterested Polish settlers would gain the trust of their Portuguese hosts in Angola, Smoleński was convinced that Polish missionaries would offer reassurance to potential African converts.

Underlining that it could not serve as the primary driving factor, Smoleński, as much a colonial activist as a Catholic, still mentioned an ulterior motive behind the Polish participation in Catholic missions. Predicting that, in the future, masses of Polish citizens might have to leave overpopulated Poland for “exotic” lands, the professor wished that missionaries would earn their countrymen a “capital of trust” from which entire diasporas would profit.¹⁶⁷ As Smoleński implied, however, the Polish missionary effort was hardly more than tangential to colonial aspirations, since missions and “colonial actions” differed in their respective objectives. In contrast to the ZPK/LMiK, which envisioned settlement and investment in Africa as generating dividends for Poland, the missionaries requested support for activities that would, in their opinion, benefit Africa. The spiritual leader of the mission at Broken Hill, for instance, asked the Polish faithful to contribute financially to purchase school supplies, clothing, and other items of daily use for

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 205.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 206–7.

Africans.¹⁶⁸ Notwithstanding this fundamental difference, Warsaw would consider Polish missions as potential sources of expertise for colonial projects in the late 1930s. In the meanwhile, however,



Figure 12. The Polish mission at Broken Hill, Northern Rhodesia. Polish missionaries were more concerned with converting Africans than with Poland's modernity. Source: NAC 1-R-664-2.

it was rather the idea of Poland's moral mandate in Africa that Catholics contributed to colonial discourse. In response to gossip concerning the Polish claim to Cameroon, the Catholic weekly

Gazeta Świąteczna

envisioned a bright future for any Polish colonies in Africa:

“*Murzyni* would be keen to learn our language, as Ruthenians and Lithuanians considered it an honor to speak Polish a couple of hundred years ago. Of course, everything would depend on how we would treat the local population. But it is to be assumed that a Polish government, or at least Poland's protection, would merit gratitude rather than hatred: that we would be able to uplift the less enlightened, not debase them, and that we would contribute to the basic welfare among locals all the while increasing the wealth of the mother country.”¹⁶⁹

In this manner, the Catholic author of the editorial implied Poland's special competence not only in spreading the Gospel but also in carrying out a civilizing mission. Initially, this discourse

¹⁶⁸ Bruno T.J. Wolnik, “Czego nam potrzeba?,” *Misje Katolickie* 47, no. 7–8 (1928): 289–92.

¹⁶⁹ Kaź. Pr., “Z ostatnich dni,” *Gazeta Świąteczna*, no. 2480 (August 12, 1928): 2.

remained the domain of Catholic commentators and resembled the publications of the ZPK/LMiK only superficially. Although both groups believed in Poland's moral mandate in Africa, the former made the claim in relation to Africans and the latter in relation to other Europeans: the ZPK/LMiK argued that Poland's peripheral status justified colonial expansion while the Catholic circles underlined it as a factor facilitating dealing with Africans.

In a similar manner, whereas the ZPK was concerned with Poland's modernity and cared little for Africa's development, Polish-Catholic missionaries' socioeconomic aims in Africa were more in line with the Church's internationalist prerogatives. In one article concerning the "colored worker's future" from *Misje Katolickie*, the author praised the expansion of Catholic social teaching as outlined in the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, as well as the French cleric Francis Aupiais's condemnation of "colonial errors." The writer called upon Catholic missionaries to support the French colonial authorities and the International Labor Bureau in inspecting working conditions in European-owned mines across Africa and Asia.¹⁷⁰ Among the abuses of modern capitalism, the Catholic journalist regretted the outlawing of black syndicates in the Union of South Africa as well as the sale of opium in Asia. As specific Catholic antidotes to these abominations, the author mentioned Catholic credit unions and self-help associations established across Africa.¹⁷¹ He discussed efforts to employ textile industry for the benefit of indigenous people in Ushirombo, Tanganyika:

"Slowly, a weaving mill has been built, and it seems that the gracious Lord himself helped establish it. Not everything proceeds without obstacles and difficulties, but our Blacks [*Czarni*] love the work. Since they are accustomed to complete liberty, accuracy

¹⁷⁰ J.M., "O przyszłość kolorowego robotnika," *Misje Katolickie* 47, no. 7–8 (1928): 351–52.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 353.

and regularity in work demands much from them at the beginning, but we have not let them abandon their labor. It was about them not getting used to work according to their whims. We have managed, with goodness and patience, to achieve good results. (...) They are so happy to get paid at the end of the week! (...) Their trust for the Brothers and Sisters increases, whom they come to see at every opportunity.”¹⁷²

In this way, the Catholic missionaries positioned themselves as patient mentors teaching somewhat idle Africans the meaning and benefit of labor. Although neither movement was free of colonial and racial prejudice, it was Poland’s Catholic missionary community that was interested in improving the living conditions in Africa, whereas the ZPK/LMiK was interested in improving the living conditions in Poland thanks to expansion in Africa. It was therefore Catholic priests that tended to produce comprehensive studies of local cultures under missionary influence, as opposed to studies of local conditions for trade and settlement.¹⁷³

Conclusion

During the Paris Peace Conference, Polish colonial pundits considered making claims to former German colonies, primarily in Africa, which they imagined as a form of compensation for human and material losses wrought to the Polish lands during World War I. In this manner, their discourse posited Poland as a post-imperial periphery to suggest the country’s moral mandate to a slice of Africa. According to this logic, Poland should have received a mandate from the League of Nations or a “colonial” concession from another state. In effect, starting in the late 1920s, the colonial lobby that was ultimately incorporated into the LMiR/LMiK called for “colonial actions” in Africa to establish experimental trading posts and plantations, especially along its western coast,

¹⁷² Ibid., 356.

¹⁷³ See, for example, Alojzy Majewski, *Świat murzyński* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Księży Pallotynów, 1930).

in order to eliminate Western intermediaries from Poland's trade with the continent. While emigration agencies and partnerships lobbied the government for specific policies in South America, often conflating the channeling of emigration with colonial pioneering, the LMiK imagined its "colonial actions" as engaging limited numbers of settlers in Africa and as geared more toward commerce. Moreover, the LMiK's broad profile as an institution that aimed to drag Poland into modernity through the sea helped in presenting colonial aspirations as desirable to the state. Although it was implied that Polish Catholics would carry out the LMiK's colonial expansion, the Catholic Church considered Poland's mission to be the economic uplifting of Africa, not the other way around.

Chapter 3

At the Margins of Empire

“Only immigrants from countries that do not aspire to create their [own] colonies should colonize Angola. Poland is one of the best countries for this purpose. It has no colonial aspirations, and it is an agricultural country with all the advantages to generate wealth in Angola, as it has already done in Brazil, Argentina, and elsewhere.”¹

At the turn of the 1930s, the ZPK believed that commercial expansion through limited settlement in Africa would drag Poland into modernity. To implement this idea in practice, the emerging colonial lobby attempted to partner Poland with the Portuguese and French empires. In the first place, they promoted Poland as an innocuous nation that would allegedly not infringe upon the political integrity of these Western empires, in contrast to “rapacious” Germany, one of Poland’s greatest geopolitical foes. Geopolitics dovetailed with ideology in this Polish approach to colonial expansion, since, in order to participate in Western colonialism, settlers and activists filed a group application for a cultural membership in the West. At the same time, however, the colonial milieu was internally split. While most supporters imagined “colonial actions” as commercial endeavors serving the state, others considered emigration a demographic experiment, either to create utopian communities in a colonial context or to enrich themselves. In this chapter, I explore the role of this tension during the first Polish “colonial action,” which took place in Portuguese Angola, as well as the subsequent shift to a stricter commercial approach to partnering with the French Empire.

¹ Rita Zilberman, “Se o Imigrante Polaco e Bom Ou Não Colono Para Angola,” July 1932, 1–2, 65010/3.6, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

Planning Limited Emigration to Angola

Like the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland, Portuguese Angola (Figure 1) enticed Polish colonial pundits with its tenuous political status and abundance of natural resources. Although the history of Portuguese presence extends back to 1575, the year in which the first coastal Portuguese settlement was established, Lisbon could never secure its full control of Angola.

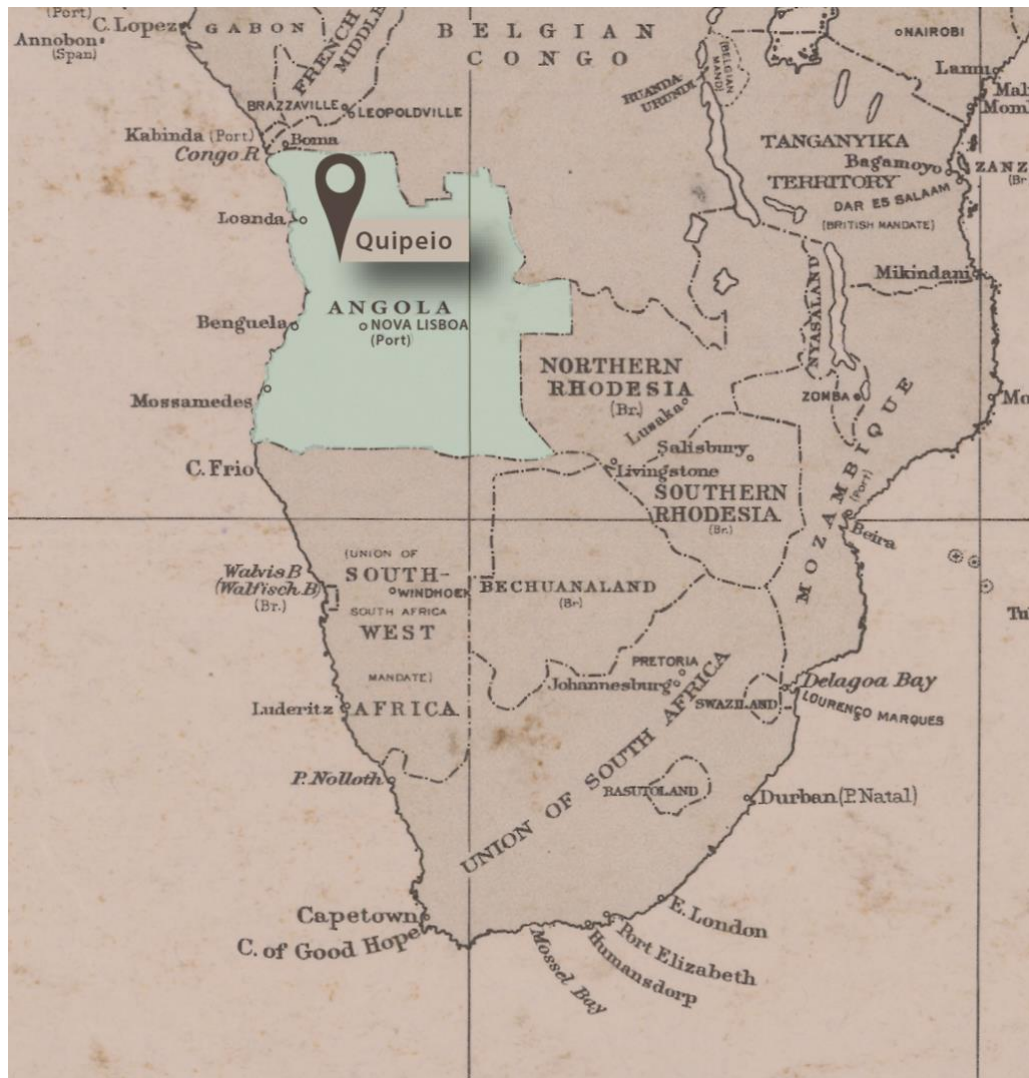


Figure 1. Map showing the approximate location of Quipeio in Angola. Edited from: Hydrographic Office of the U.S. Navy (Public Domain). Copyright of the edited version: Piotr Puchalski.

In the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Portuguese built settlements at Luanda in these Bantu-inhabited parts of southwestern Africa while waging a prolonged military conflict with the Kongo Kingdom for control of the highlands in the interior. By the end of the nineteenth century,

Lisbon conquered almost all of present-day Angola and established a governorship in the territory. Still, other Western powers did not immediately recognize Portuguese sovereignty over Angola, which continued to be considered the lynchpin of British, Belgian, and German colonial interests during the “Scramble for Africa” and beyond.²

Poland’s future delegate to Lisbon in the 1930s, Tadeusz Romer, took note of Portugal’s precarious position in Angola, an important source of natural resources, already in his writings from the years 1913–1914.³ During his term, Romer described Portugal’s fears of real and perceived threats to its colonial integrity as a “fearful conservatism of a satisfied man” (*plochliwy konserwatyzm człowieka sytego*).⁴ He called Portugal’s colonies a mere geopolitical “addition” (*przybudówka*) to the British Empire” that was afraid of its senior partner but listened to it, as it could not financially afford anything else.⁵ In fact, in the years leading up to World War I, Britain had planned a secret sale of Portuguese colonies to Germany to discourage the Kaiser from starting a colonial war. Portugal’s possession of Angola, however, remained tenuous even long after the conclusion of the global conflict.⁶ In October 1927, Jan Perłowski, the Polish delegate in Madrid, informed Warsaw that Lisbon worried about the Germans and the Italians wishing to annex or purchase Angola and would therefore welcome only “socially productive” and “politically safe” colonists from Europe into its African possessions.⁷ Moreover, the Portuguese government soon dragged Berlin to the International Court of Arbitration in Paris, demanding reparations for the

² See, for example, David Birmingham, *Portugal and Africa* (Springer, 2016); Gerald J. Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese: The Myth and the Reality* (University of California Press, 1980).

³ Tadeusz Romer, “Notes on African colonies,” 1914 1913, 77004/1, Tadeusz Romer Papers, HI.

⁴ “Tadeusz Romer to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” August 16, 1935, 1, 65010/1.3, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ “Załącznik nr 14. Ogólne studium polityczno-wojskowe Portugalii,” 1932, 5–6, I.303.4.4004, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego, CAW WBH.

⁷ “Jan Perłowski to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” October 22, 1927, 65010/3.2, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

acts of German aggression that occurred in southern Angola and Mozambique during World War I.⁸

Lisbon's increased colonial bellicosity corresponded to the period of nationalist and revolutionary upheavals that ended the First Portuguese Republic. In April 1928, despite his misgivings about its anticlerical tendencies, António de Oliveira Salazar succumbed to popular pleas to join the contemporary republican Portuguese government as finance minister. He immediately began to usher in policies that stabilized Portugal's currency and increased budget revenue.⁹ By July 1932, Salazar had been appointed the country's prime minister, paving the way for an authoritarian Catholic corporatist regime called the *Estado Novo*.¹⁰ But Salazar contributed to his country's tightening grip over Angola already in his capacity as finance minister. In January 1931, in response to rumors of Polish infiltration, a British official from the Foreign Office wrote:

“The opening of the Benguela Railway must have awakened interest in the vast untapped wealth of Angola in many quarters. That Portugal will be able to develop it (after grotesque exhibition which her official hierarchy there has made of itself for so long) cannot be seriously believed, and we must always envisage the possibility that, when Dr. Salazar and the present wave of nationalism in Portugal have with the swing of pendulum disappeared before less able and more corrupt and mercenary forces, she may succumb to bribes in respect of Angola as she has done elsewhere.”¹¹

In this manner, despite their own previous attempt to sell Angola to the Germans, the British applauded Salazar for his ability to keep the colony safe from foreign influence. They did not

⁸ “Marian Szumlakowski to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” January 3, 1935, 65010/1.1, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

⁹ See, for example, Filipe Ribeiro De Meneses, *Salazar: A Political Biography* (Enigma Books, 2013).

¹⁰ See Tom Gallagher, *Portugal: A Twentieth-Century Interpretation* (Manchester University Press, 1983), 85–111.

¹¹ Wiggin, “Notes on Polish immigration to Angola,” January 24, 1931, FO 371/15758/W802, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

believe, however, that Lisbon's efficient governance of its empire would last long, which would encourage other nations to preside over Angola's "development."

In the late 1920s, the ZPK believed that, despite their qualms about foreign meddling, the Portuguese wished for additional manpower to stimulate Angola's economic growth.¹² In December 1928, in his outline of the LMiR's colonial program, Kazimierz Głuchowski identified Portuguese Angola as the location where the first Polish "colonial action" would take place. Manifesting an economic-demographic approach to colonial expansion, the chairman considered Angola an appropriate terrain for Polish "economic-human penetration" since the country was under the governance of a suitable "contractor" (*kontrahent*) without political animosities against Poland.¹³ In April and May 1928, Głuchowski went to Lisbon to persuade the Portuguese to open Angola to Polish emigration, alluding that Polish settlers would come from the wealthy classes. His visit did not have an official character but was a successful attempt to lobby "local factors tied economically to Angola, which are amenable to making a whole series of facilitations for the Polish action."¹⁴ By December 1929, committees with the aim of establishing settlements in Angola emerged all over Poland, as well as a partnership with limited responsibility called "Polangola" to promote commercial exchange between Poland and Angola.¹⁵ Simultaneously, a scientific expedition went to Angola on a joint initiative of the ZPK, Research Institute, and Polish Station for Tropical Studies. The head of the expedition was Franciszek Łyp, Głuchowski's business partner with whom the former consul had established a colony called "Amolofaca" in

¹² See, for example, Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, "O przyszłość naszego wychodźstwa i własne kolonie," *Wychodźca*, May 4, 1924, 5–10.

¹³ Kazimierz Głuchowski, "Akcja kolonialna Ligi Morskiej i Rzecznej," *Morze*, no. 12 (1928): 28.

¹⁴ "Kronika Związku," *Morze*, no. 6 (1928): 26.

¹⁵ "Przegląd Kolonialny," *Morze*, no. 12 (1929): 29.

Paraná in the early 1920s.¹⁶ The other leading participant was Jerzy Chmielewski, a colonial expert from the Research Institute.¹⁷ The remaining two members of the expedition, Bronisław Noiszewski and Tadeusz Pigłowski, represented private partnerships interested in channeling emigration to Angola.¹⁸

In the introduction to Łyp's expedition report published in 1930, Gustaw Załęcki suggested that Poland was in a special position to send colonists to Angola since his country's integration into the world's colonial system would not constitute a revisionist act intended to tip off the balance of power.¹⁹ He argued that Angola had become an object not only of Anglo-Saxon capitalism radiating from the Congo but also German and Italian colonial revisionism that threatened its political status. In contrast, Załęcki pointed out, Polish settlements in Angola would not threaten Portugal politically but would act "in harmony" with the interests of Portugal and Western Europe, which lacked sufficient manpower to develop the country.²⁰ He predicted, moreover, that Angola would serve as a conduit for closer political and economic integration between Poland and its Western allies.²¹ Lastly, Załęcki explained that limited emigration to Angola was as important as the concentration of Polish emigrants in the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland because a Polish presence in Africa was needed to secure Poland's interests in the future.²² It was the presentation of opportunities that Polish settlers could safeguard for their country that comprised most of Łyp's proper expedition report.

¹⁶ Franciszek Feliks Łyp, *Marzenia o ziemi pod równikiem: wspomnienia z lat 1913- 1935* (Warsaw, 1972), 27, 34–35.

¹⁷ Gustaw Załęcki in Franciszek Feliks Łyp, *Wysoki płaskowyż Angoli: sprawozdanie kierownika ekspedycji polskiej do Angoli w roku 1929* (Naukowy Instytut Emigracyjny, 1930), i–ii.

¹⁸ Łyp, *Marzenia o ziemi pod równikiem*, 52.

¹⁹ Gustaw Załęcki in Łyp, *Wysoki płaskowyż Angoli*, iv–v.

²⁰ Gustaw Załęcki in *Ibid.*, v.

²¹ Gustaw Załęcki in *Ibid.*, iv–v.

²² Gustaw Załęcki in *Ibid.*, vi–vii.

In the first place, Łyp described the region considered suitable for European settlement, which was known as the high plateau (*wysoki płaskowyż*) and stretched for 120,000 sq. km. It was located between the 10th and 16th latitude, to the east of a mountain range parallel to Angola's western littoral at a distance of 100–150 km. Situated more than 1,500 m above sea level and featuring a multitude of streams and hillocks, the high plateau stretched from the northern district of Huambo in Benguela province to Angola's southern border and the Cuanza River to the east. Łyp identified the climate of the region as moderate, with temperatures rarely exceeding 32°C during the constant summer season that consisted of rainy and dry intervals. Łyp stressed that malaria was only present in the lower, more forested parts of the plateau.²³ He also emphasized that a newly built railroad connected the Atlantic ports of Lobito and Benguela to the more inland town of Lépi. From there, the railway traversed the plateau all the way to the Congolese border to facilitate commercial exchange with the Congolese mines. Both Łyp and his companion, Jerzy Chmielewski, pointed out that another railroad was being built from the littoral to Villa Nova in Huambo, and that an existing line going east from the capital of Loanda would eventually be extended into the plateau, which was also home to about 5,000 km of excellent motor roads.²⁴ Chmielewski noted, on his part, that Benguela's bay proved to be too shallow for steam ships, which prompted the development of Lobito and a popular movement to purchase land in its environs.²⁵

Without specifying any desired religion or ethnicity of the settlers, Łyp underlined that only wealthy farmers and experienced merchants with proficiency in Portuguese should make the

²³ Ibid., 3–20.

²⁴ Jerzy Chmielewski, *Angola. Notatki z podróży po Afryce* (Warsaw: M. Arcta, 1929), 57–60; Łyp, *Wysoki płaskowyż Angoli*, 30–37.

²⁵ Chmielewski, *Angola. Notatki z podróży po Afryce*, 17.

move from Poland, a claim he repeated in shorter reports published in *Wychodźca*.²⁶ He calculated that a prospective colonist should bring at least the equivalent of \$10,000 to purchase land and farming machines necessary to start an enterprise.²⁷ Writing in the aftermath of the Polish expedition, Kazimierz Głuchowski accepted the suggestion that channeling peasant emigration to Angola was not desirable.²⁸ Another activist, Józef Anusz, pointed out that emigrants from Portugal itself chose Brazil over Angola, where the pressure of European capitalism was not as great.²⁹ Although its climate was comparable to Paraná's, the high plateau was a battleground of European colonial ambitions in a way that Brazil was not, or had not yet become.³⁰ Moreover, Łyp considered Angola's *murzyni* to be cheap labor that rendered the importation of white economic migrants unnecessary.³¹ According to him, it was the native populations that occupied themselves with small farming of food staples such as corn, rice, and beans in the plateau region. In contrast, whites owned larger plantations of more important crops, especially coffee, which grew better at higher altitudes. Nonetheless, since the Great Depression had bankrupted many Portuguese farmers, the Portuguese government, though still afraid of other Europeans, was easing restrictions against white immigration.³²

According to Łyp, Polish emigration to Angola was supposed to follow the ZPK's guidelines for colonial pioneering along the coast of West Africa, which was supposed to eliminate the need for foreign intermediaries. The more lenient Portuguese attitude allegedly created a chance for wealthier Polish farmers and entrepreneurs to settle in a country hospitable to coffee

²⁶ Franciszek Feliks Łyp, "Angola," *Wychodźca*, November 3, 1929, 3–5.

²⁷ Łyp, *Wysoki płaskowyż Angoli*, 95–101.

²⁸ Kazimierz Głuchowski, "Z planem dla jutra," *Morze*, no. 2–3 (1930): 43.

²⁹ Józef Anusz, "W sprawie kolonizacji Angoli," *Wychodźca*, February 22, 1930, 2–3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*; Franciszek Feliks Łyp, "W sprawie kolonizacji Angoli," *Wychodźca*, March 22, 1930, 10–11; Łyp, *Wysoki płaskowyż Angoli*, 3–20.

³¹ Łyp, *Wysoki płaskowyż Angoli*, 115.

³² *Ibid.*, 40–52, 95–101.

and fiber crops, and one that was a transit point for precious goods such as gold, cobalt, and radium flowing from the Belgian Congo.³³ In this way, the Polish expedition imagined Polish colonists in Angola as both planters and merchants that would supply the capital-stripped and Western-controlled Poland with the resources necessary for its industrial development. The Polish subscription to the European view of *murzyni* as cheap labor ensured that Angola would not be treated as a potential emigration outlet but as an object of limited pioneering. Indeed, following Łyp's prescriptions, Polish emigration was confined and resulted in little participation from domestic emigration agencies such as the Emigration Syndicate. According to official government bulletins, only six Polish citizens emigrated to Angola in the years 1931–1932,³⁴ but the state's hands-off approach meant that others likely escaped registration.



Figure 2. From left: Michał Zamoyski and unidentified Polish planters in Angola. Source: *Morze*, no. 4 (1938).

Most of the Polish colonists settled around the mission of Quipeio in the northern district of Huambo, where they established farms and *fazendas*, or coffee plantations, and where they tried their luck in commerce

and industry. (Figure 2) The first party of Polish arrivals in Huambo, which left Poland in December 1929,³⁵ consisted of Count Michał Zamoyski, his wife Maria née Brzozowska, and their

³³ Ibid., 110–16.

³⁴ See Danuta Szczechowska-Frączyk, "Polscy osadnicy w Angoli w okresie międzywojennym," *Afryka*, no. 15 (2002): 71.

³⁵ "Przegląd Kolonialny," 29.

chauffeur Jan Kowalczyk.³⁶ The second party included Adam Paszkowicz and his companions: Roman Jesionowski, Wiesław Kłobukowski and Ryszard Kannewisz. According to *Morze*, in the spring of 1930 Paszkowicz's group traveled through the Sahara in a mini-truck to set up a cement factory in Lobito.³⁷ There, Jesionowski and Kłobukowski split off to establish *fazendas* in Huambo, not far from Zamoyski.³⁸ Emigrants Tadeusz Dekanski and Zygmunt Gebethner also settled in close proximity to the count in the years 1930–1932.³⁹ Lastly, another Polish farmer living around Quipeio was Jerzy Rodziewicz, an entrepreneur trying to revive a ruined *fazenda* left after the death of its previous master, a Polish physician named Królikowski.⁴⁰ More ephemeral settlers named Tadeusz Łychowski and Tadeusz Pigłowski are barely mentioned in the sources.⁴¹ In April 1931, Maria Zamoyska counted fourteen Polish settlers in the region.⁴²

Subscribing to Western Colonialism

Michał and Maria Zamoyski (Figure 3), wealthy members of the Polish landowning elite, emigrated to Angola in cooperation with the partnership “Polangola” but with individualistic aims in mind.⁴³ Their reason for becoming colonists appeared purely economic at first, as the count considered Angola to be a “country of the future,” and potentially a rich one, if only administered properly.⁴⁴ In early March 1930, after spending several months in western Europe, the Zamoyskis arrived in Lobito with their chauffeur, where they admired a newly built marina that could

³⁶ “Maria Zamoyska’s diary,” June 12, 1930, 35/84/208, Archiwum Ordynacji Zamoyskich w Kozłowie, APL.

³⁷ Jan Rozwadowski, “Przegląd kolonialny,” *Morze*, no. 5 (1930): 31.

³⁸ “Kronika kolonialna,” *Morze*, no. 8 (1930): 24.

³⁹ “Spis Polaków zamieszkałych w Afryce,” 1938, 1, 2/464/3/337, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

⁴⁰ “Maria Zamoyska to Jadwiga,” May 20, 1932, 5, 804/1/MPK/A/33, AMZK; Kazimierz Nowak, *Across the Dark Continent. Bicycle Diaries from Africa 1931-1936*, ed. Łukasz Wierzbicki, trans. Ida Naruszewicz-Rodger (Poznań: Sorus, 2017), 258.

⁴¹ See Szczechowska-Frączyk, “Polscy osadnicy w Angoli w okresie międzywojennym,” 72–80.

⁴² “Maria Zamoyska to Lech and Jadwiga,” April 12, 1931, 4, 804/1/MPK/A/29, AMZK.

⁴³ “Emigration Office to Ignacy Ziętkiewicz,” May 14, 1930, 2/474/5.1/1612, Ambasada RP w Berlinie, AAN.

⁴⁴ “Michał Zamoyski to his father,” November 23, 1931, 33, 35/84/208, Archiwum Ordynacji Zamoyskich w Kozłowie, APL.

accommodate large ships.⁴⁵ From there, the count wasted no time in examining the progress of “civilization” in Angola, although he considered the Portuguese administration somewhat “backward.”⁴⁶ He described his dangerous car ride across jungle, valleys, and rivers to reach the factory of a European company, where modern machines worked to extract olive oil from local produce. He appreciated the forests and rivers cutting across the high plateau, but really admired the modernity encroaching into Angola in the form of excellent motor roads “as if from a dream.”⁴⁷

In consequence, Zamoyski purchased a Chevrolet truck and decided to bid for plots of land around Lobito, West Africa’s “natural port.”⁴⁸ In particular, the count was interested in growing and exporting cheap local coffee as an alternative to its Brazilian counterpart widely sold in Poland. For this purpose, he quickly began to build a prosperous *fazenda* called “Boa Serra” (“good mountain”) (Figure 4) in proximity to Quipeio, which involved not only clearing the surrounding forest and erecting a house but also creating a sewage system, setting up a petroleum-powered electricity generator, and importing some cattle for trade and



Figure 3. The wedding of Michał Zamoyski and Maria Brzozowska. Unlike most Polish colonists, the Zamoyskis came from wealthy families. Source: NAC 1-P-2212.

sustenance.⁴⁹ In fact, Zamoyski turned out to be a good farmer. In April 1931, his wife wrote to their friends or relatives about planting plots of coffee, eucalyptus, beans, and wheat. She was to be taking care of lighter gardening tasks and domestic chores, while 250 hired hands worked in

⁴⁵ Michał Zamoyski, “Lisbona,” n.d., 11–14, 35/84/208, Archiwum Ordynacji Zamoyskich w Kozłówe, APL.

⁴⁶ “Michał Zamoyski to his father,” May 2, 1930, 3, 35/84/208, Archiwum Ordynacji Zamoyskich w Kozłówe, APL.

⁴⁷ Zamoyski, “Lisbona,” 14–17.

⁴⁸ “Michał Zamoyski to his father,” March 25, 1930, 35/84/208, Archiwum Ordynacji Zamoyskich w Kozłówe, APL.

⁴⁹ “Michał Zamoyski to his father,” May 2, 1930.

the *fazenda*.⁵⁰ By August 1933 Maria Zamoyska was writing about a “beautiful” harvest of 1,000 kg of coffee and their concession in Quipeio being granted permanent status.⁵¹



Figure 4. “Boa Serra,” the Zamoyskis’ conservative utopia. Source: NAC 1-E-401.

Zamoyski

considered the “healthier” parts of Angola’s high plateau, especially Huambo, “excellent for our Polish folk [*wiara*].”⁵² His “folk” was to consist of businessmen capable of farming and making high profits from trading in

land, coffee, and dairy. The count proposed bringing more Poles to Angola to create a “small but strong Polish colony whose members would be united in a self-assisting agricultural association.”⁵³ Zamoyski’s economic motives, however, could not be decoupled from his and his wife’s discontent with what they perceived as a decline of European culture at home. Maria Zamoyska was glad to have escaped the Great Depression devouring Poland, writing in her diary that she and her husband felt “good, so good” in Angola, only wishing that “their close ones could be here with us and finally take a full breath away from European slavery.”⁵⁴ Zamoyski himself hoped that his cooperative of Polish colonists would not only share farming machinery but would also become a

⁵⁰ “Maria Zamoyska to Lech and Jadwiga,” 1–2.

⁵¹ “Maria Zamoyska to Jadwiga,” August 14, 1933, 4, 804/1/MPK/A/33, AMZK.

⁵² “Michał Zamoyski to his father,” May 2, 1930, 1.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵⁴ “Maria Zamoyska’s diary.”

“future ‘black’ [conservative] center of the Polish nation’s reaction [to left-wing change].”⁵⁵ As a cradle of fiscal and moral conservatism, Zamoyski’s settlement would save Poles from a “moral decay, providing them with work in the womb of nature” and encourage their return to old rules of chivalry.⁵⁶ Confessing that his patriotism only grew in Angola, the count wished to recreate an idealized “Poland” in Africa: “From afar even our Poland somehow looks much nicer and I become a much greater patriot here than at home... I would like to preserve at least the illusion of great Poland.”⁵⁷ By moral decay, Zamoyski meant anything ranging from financial corruption and institutional inefficiency to sexual promiscuity and overturned social norms in a nation-state that was only about two-thirds Polish-Catholic. At the same time, the count was not only dreaming of a conservative “Poland” but was also, as most other Polish settlers, aspiring to half-imagined standards of Western civilization.

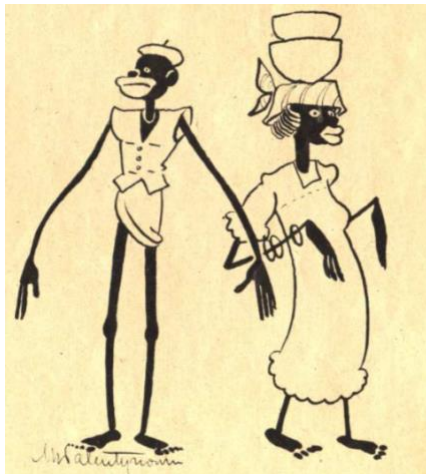


Figure 5. An example of a Polish depiction of Africans that subscribed to racist stereotypes. Source: *Morze*, no. 4 (1938).

Treading the ideological line of their Portuguese hosts, most Polish explorers in Angola expressed racist attitudes toward the indigenous people. (Figure 5) Jerzy Chmielewski, for example, wrote sarcastically that a “wild thought of helping his wife in the field” never occurred to a *murzyn* of the Bantu tribe since the *murzyn* had spent years working for white people to purchase her as property.⁵⁸ In a similar vein, the

Polish expeditioner echoed a Portuguese settler’s critique of

native populations for allegedly never seeking help in European-built hospitals, preferring their

⁵⁵ “Michał Zamoyski to his father,” May 2, 1930, 6.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵⁸ Chmielewski, *Angola. Notatki z podróży po Afryce*, 28–29.

“wizards and shamans” over modern medicine.⁵⁹ Moreover, in a manner of othering, Chmielewski described a *murzyński* dance witnessed at a “colonial ball” in Huambo, writing: “the rhythm of the drums was so fast that it became virtually undetectable to a European ear – only a *murzyn* could fish those sounds out and make dance moves to their rhythm.”⁶⁰ The extent to which many Poles subscribed to European racism in relation to Angola was also detectable in a report of the Polish military intelligence (*Dwójka*), which described the influx of *murzyni* into Portugal as a harmful mixing of the races whereby the white race inherited “all the negative traits of the black race, of which the anti-social disposition was a major one.”⁶¹

Polish colonists benefited from the racial divide that continued to determine economic relations in Angola despite Lisbon’s measures intended to curb abuses against the indigenous Bantu and to encourage them to become Portuguese citizens and independent farmers.⁶² Like their Portuguese hosts, Zamoyski and others treated native populations as cheap labor, which exposed the extent to which their quest for economic prosperity could not be disentangled from their involvement in Western colonialism. In May 1930, Zamoyski wrote to his father that “*murzyni* are trained (*wytresowany*), work quietly and without noise like ghosts, know their duties very well – one does not need to worry about anything... they virtually guess your thoughts.”⁶³ Moreover, the count defended his Portuguese hosts against contemporary German accusations concerning abuses against natives, arguing that any Europeans would give “lazy” *murzyni* a good beating, especially as the latter forced their wives to do men’s work.⁶⁴ Likewise, another Polish settler, Adam Paszkowicz, echoed the words of Huambo’s military commander, describing *murzyni* as

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁶¹ “Załącznik nr 14. Ogólne studium polityczno-wojskowe Portugalii,” 6.

⁶² Chmielewski, *Angola. Notatki z podróży po Afryce*, 121–23.

⁶³ “Michał Zamoyski to his father,” May 2, 1930, 1.

⁶⁴ “Michał Zamoyski to his father,” November 23, 1931, 32.

“large children.”⁶⁵ He suggested that whites hired native populations in numbers larger than normally necessary to compensate for their alleged laziness.⁶⁶ *Murzyni* were not fully given their own voices in Paszkowicz’s account but were made to speak Polish incorrectly to reflect their intellectual inability to grasp the language.⁶⁷ The only admirable things about them appeared to be their Christian religious practice, in which, however, they could not maintain proper solemnity.⁶⁸

The ways in which Polish settlers imitated Westerners in their treatment of Africans was noted in a remarkable contemporary account by Kazimierz Nowak (1897–1937) (Figure 6), an amateur cyclist born in the Galician town of Stryj. In 1931, to support his family and fulfill his monumental childhood aspirations, Nowak cycled and walked around most of Africa while submitting accounts and photographs from his quest to illustrated periodicals ranging from the Polish-Catholic *Przewodnik Katolicki* to the more secular *Światowid*.⁶⁹ In the next five years, the cyclist made a north-south loop across Africa, from Algiers and Tunis to Johannesburg and Cape Town, exploring the diverse region between Sudan, Nigeria, Belgian Congo, Angola, and the Rhodesias.⁷⁰ Reflecting upon Nowak’s complex attitude toward colonial Africa of the 1930s would extend beyond the scope of this study. It should suffice to say that it was not flattering to some of his compatriots in Africa. Nowak wrote to his wife Maria in Poland that he could not stomach the Polish emigrant elites for their mistreatment of the indigenous people.⁷¹ He distinguished, however, between simple Polish emigrants and the “intelligentsia saving money while preying on

⁶⁵ Adam Paszkowicz, *Listy z Angoli. Afrykańskie opowiadania kolonialne* (Warsaw, 1932), 29.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 37–38.

⁶⁹ Note that Nowak’s press reports are available in English under a somewhat misleading title *Across the Dark Continent. Bicycle Diaries from Africa 1931-1936*.

⁷⁰ See Łukasz Wierzbicki in Nowak, *Across the Dark Continent. Bicycle Diaries from Africa 1931-1936*, 11–22.

⁷¹ “Kazimierz Nowak to Maria Nowak,” February 26, 1933, 52, Nowak II.

murzyni.”⁷²

Nowak’s impression of the Polish settlement around the mission of Quipeio was mixed. In December 1934, the cyclist described Jerzy Rodziewicz as “a young man with plenty of fight and enthusiasm in him,” but also noted that his *fazenda*, inherited from a deceased Polish physician, was a “dilapidated shack, surrounded by some long-neglected vegetable patches, a few banana plants, some agave bushes and eucalyptus trees.”⁷³ In contrast, Zamoyski’s estate was an idyllic place, with “dappled cows grazing in the pastures,” supplying “the barren soil with fertilizer, without which the *fazenda* could not function.” Moreover, “Boa Serra” was technologically advanced, as “water gushed along numerous irrigation canals, one of which delivered it to a mill producing flour for the natives.”⁷⁴ He also appreciated the Zamoyskis, calling the count a “nice



Figure 6. Kazimierz Nowak in Africa. The Polish cyclist was a critic of Western colonialism and his countrymen’s attempts to subscribe to it. Source: NAC 1-S-3555-1.

man” and his wife “extremely polite.”⁷⁵ This, however, did not affect his opinion about encouraging emigration to Angola. Nowak wrote to his wife that “Angola was the most backward country in Africa but could be a paradise,” and that “it almost hurts

that I cannot describe what I experience since the Poles (and Łyp first among them) would attack me.”⁷⁶ The cyclist’s comment published in the Polish press was less direct. He claimed that reports

⁷² “Kazimierz Nowak to Maria Nowak,” May 22, 1933, 147, Nowak II.

⁷³ Nowak, *Across the Dark Continent. Bicycle Diaries from Africa 1931-1936*, 258.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁷⁵ “Kazimierz Nowak to Maria Nowak,” December 28, 1934, 218, Nowak III.

⁷⁶ “Kazimierz Nowak to Maria Nowak,” December 31, 1934, 221, Nowak III.

from the Polish expedition of 1929 had “painted the future of colonization in rainbow colors.” He did not “accuse its authors of bad will,” since, according to him, it was the wealth of the neighboring Belgian Congo that had attracted them to Angola. Still, “the best Polish farmer is a helpless amateur on the Angolan plateaux.”⁷⁷ Notwithstanding warnings like this one, the danger facing the Polish settlement was not climatic but simultaneously geopolitical and ideological in nature.

Ideology in the Service of Geopolitics

It was not enough for Polish colonists in Quipeio and supporters of emigration to Angola to market themselves as Westerners capable of the cultural uplifting of the “natives.” Portugal believed that there was a lingering German threat to its possessions in Africa, since the British had attempted to sell Angola to appease the Kaiser before World War I. Polish settlers therefore needed to distinguish themselves as protectors of the geopolitical status quo in Angola. This was not difficult, as the mutual Polish-German resentment stemming from the conflict over disputed territories in Europe was spilling into Angola, with members of neither national group sparing petty vexations to the other. Zamoyski wrote to his father that local Germans failed to give applause as the Polish community at Quipeio choreographed a *krakowiak* dance in front of other Europeans at a local party.⁷⁸ Most importantly, however, it was this Polish-German competition that ultimately defined the Polish government’s attitude toward the “colonial action” in Angola, forcing it to support Polish expansion. Indeed, if Warsaw had not been fully familiar with the ZPK’s designs from the start of Głuchowski’s initiative, Polish diplomats learned about them soon enough.

⁷⁷ Nowak, *Across the Dark Continent. Bicycle Diaries from Africa 1931-1936*, 260.

⁷⁸ “Michał Zamoyski to his father,” March 7, 1933, 7, 35/84/208, Archiwum Ordynacji Zamoyskich w Kozłówce, APL.

In August 1930, two members of a small group of investors, Stanisław Skurzyński and Michał Benisławski, contacted the Polish delegate in Lisbon, Jan Perłowski, about Angola. Writing on behalf of a Warsaw banker, Adam Tarnowski, they asked him to find out, during his upcoming conversations with Portuguese officials, whether the Portuguese colony could accommodate large numbers of European farmers.⁷⁹ In response, Perłowski admitted that, theoretically, the high plateau should be able to absorb many white farmers, but underlined that any prospective emigrants must come with considerable landing money.⁸⁰ In fact, after the crisis of 1929, Portugal had subjected Angola to a wholly separate banking system and forced all visitors to exchange any hard currency such as U.S. dollars for angolars.⁸¹ Perłowski advised the group to examine the area first-hand, to contact other Poles already in Angola, and not to trust any information coming from emigration agents.⁸² In the following month, a Polish emigration attaché named Małachowski suggested the launching of diplomatic efforts to obtain a concession of no less than 10,000 sq. km for the Tarnowski group in the high plateau region.⁸³ In response, Perłowski affirmed his desire to facilitate the project discreetly through unofficial channels but expressed his reservations about the group's reckless intent to demand directly from the Portuguese government that private Portuguese property be requisitioned for the projected Polish concession.⁸⁴ Unfortunately for the diplomat, the Tarnowski group's controversial list of demands from Portugal

⁷⁹ "Stanisław Skurzyński and Michał Benisławski to Jan Perłowski," August 16, 1930, 65010/3.4, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

⁸⁰ "Jan Perłowski to Stanisław Skurzyński and Michał Benisławski," September 2, 1930, 65010/3.4, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

⁸¹ Zamoyski, "Lisbona," 6.

⁸² "Jan Perłowski to Stanisław Skurzyński and Michał Benisławski."

⁸³ Małachowski, "No.P.IV.30.811/30 w sprawie Angoli," September 29, 1930, 65010/3.4, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

⁸⁴ Jan Perłowski, "No.238/30 w sprawie kolonizacji Angoli," October 19, 1930, 65010/3.4, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

was later disclosed to the public,⁸⁵ prompting the LMiK to issue a *démenti* stating that it had no connections to the endeavor.⁸⁶

Both the LMiK and the Polish government seemed aware that they needed to tread carefully, given what Portugal perceived as a geopolitical German threat. By October 1930, Perłowski facilitated secret negotiations with Portuguese individuals to allow the injection of Polish capital into Angola. R. Touzet, Poland's honorary consul in Portugal, identified a certain Saldanha da Gania as a businessman capable of discreetly connecting the Poles to capital-hungry Portuguese companies that operated in Angola.⁸⁷ However, in an informative letter to August Zaleski, the foreign minister in Warsaw, Perłowski discouraged the Brühl Palace from using Gania's services, writing: "(...) while the [Polish] government supports engaging large Polish capitals in Angolan settlements and Mr. Saldanha would provide favors to interested Polish groups, these groups would not make proper use of his guidelines."⁸⁸ Otherwise, Perłowski was apprehensive about letting politically inexperienced colonial activists and financiers negotiate what was inevitably a political matter given the Portuguese fears that Britain, its *de facto* protector, might once again offer the sale of Angola to Germany. Indeed, Polish officials were careful not to create any impression of cooperating with the Germans in Angola. In April 1930, James Blöde, a representative of a Dresden-based bank, asked an emigration attaché, Ignacy Ziętkiewicz, if Zamoyski would be interested in purchasing a plantation in Loanda called Pumbassai, which belonged to a German farmer.⁸⁹ In response to Blöde's offer, the Emigration Office stated that it

⁸⁵ Jan Perłowski, "Nr 164/31 w sprawie kolonizacji polskiej w Angoli," January 21, 1931, 65010/3.5, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

⁸⁶ "Biuletyn Informacyjny LMiK," February 23, 1931, 6–7, 2/504/5/60, Konsulat Generalny RP w Londynie, AAN.

⁸⁷ "R. Touzet to Jan Perłowski," October 3, 1930, 65010/3.4, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

⁸⁸ "Jan Perłowski to August Zaleski, Minister of Foreign Affairs," October 7, 1930, 65010/3.4, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

⁸⁹ "James Blöde to Ignacy Ziętkiewicz," April 7, 1930, 2/474/5.1/1612, Ambasada RP w Berlinie, AAN.

was in the Polish state's interest that Poles purchase property only directly from the Portuguese authorities.⁹⁰

Judging from hindsight, Perłowski was right to remain cautious about any negotiations over Polish involvement in Angola at the official level. On December 28, 1929, as part of a trade treaty signed between Poland and Portugal, Warsaw and Lisbon had exchanged non-binding diplomatic notes allowing the future possibility of guaranteeing equal privileges to Polish colonists in Angola.⁹¹ These notes constituted a secret clause of the treaty, but the Polish government was not united in its support for the inclusion of that stipulation in the document. In fact, during the negotiations of the treaty, the Emigration Office was unsuccessful in lobbying the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to have the clause define Polish privileges in Angola more precisely.⁹² Nevertheless, what appeared to be a series of German-inspired leaks of information concerning the existence of a "colonial clause" in the Polish-Portuguese trade treaty produced international reverberations throughout 1930. In August, the British Embassy in Lisbon considered it strange that the treaty had not been immediately published in official Portuguese brochures.⁹³ By the end of January 1931, the Portuguese delegate in Warsaw, Ribeiro de Mello, had claimed in a conversation with an official at the Brühl Palace that Perłowski had allegedly withdrawn the Polish government's interest in the colonial clause.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ "Emigration Office to Ignacy Ziętkiewicz."

⁹¹ Jan Perłowski, "Nr 231/31. W sprawie klauzuli o Angoli i wystąpienia p. de Mello," January 27, 1931, 1, 65010/3.5, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

⁹² "Bolesław Nakoniecznikoff, director of the Emigration Office, to the Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," December 18, 1929, 2/322/9715, MSZ, AAN.

⁹³ "British Embassy in Lisbon to the Foreign Office," August 16, 1930, FO 371/15033, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

⁹⁴ Władysław Schwarzburg-Günther, "Nr P.IV.353/31 w sprawie stanowiska Rządu Polsk. co do zawarcia umowy kolonizacyjnej z Portugalią," January 20, 1931, 65010/3.5, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

In a subsequent message to Warsaw from January 1931, Perłowski denied Mello's claim and outlined a series of occurrences that might have caused his Portuguese colleague to pretend that Poland was withdrawing from the clause. The Polish delegate pointed out that Lisbon had feared the loss of its colonies for many years and that Berlin was stoking those fears with misinformation about alleged plans to turn the Portuguese possessions into mandates of the League of Nations.⁹⁵ Perłowski argued that it was due to such "abnormal sensitivity" that Portuguese leaders worried about the "colonial clause" creating a precedent for other powers to demand similar



Figure 7. Józef Piłsudski in Madeira. The Marshal's trip was interpreted in Lisbon as connected to Warsaw's colonial interests in Portuguese possessions. Source: NAC 22-351-2.

facilitations for their citizens in Angola. Moreover, making the Portuguese attitude ever more defensive was a series of sensational articles from western Europe, which claimed that mass migration from Poland to Angola was imminent and that Poland's annual budget included a secret colonial fund.⁹⁶

Further contributing to the atmosphere

of conspiracy was the suspicion that a trip by the aging Marshal Piłsudski to the Portuguese island of Madeira in early 1931 had been planned as a reconnaissance rather than recuperation. (Figure 7) In Lisbon, according to Perłowski, the Portuguese police had not only threatened Poland's commercial agents like Saldanha da Gania and Samuel Schwarz but had also forbidden a Polish

⁹⁵ Perłowski, "Nr 231/31. W sprawie klauzuli o Angoli i wystąpienia p. de Mello," 2.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 3. Journalists in Poland did nothing to dispel these qualms and were themselves eager to publish sensational articles. See, for example, "Czy Polska 'otrzymuje' w Afryce portugalską kolonię: Angolę?!", *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, April 9, 1930, 5.

officer travelling to Madeira to use code while telegraphing.⁹⁷ Moreover, a Polish pilot, Stanisław Skarżyński, was refused permission to fly his airplane over Angola during an African challenge competition.⁹⁸ Finally, Lisbon signaled to Warsaw in September 1930 that any Polish attempts to use the clause to negotiate benefits for Polish settlers in Angola would face financial and political obstacles from Portugal.⁹⁹

Given the aggressive Portuguese measures, Perłowski decided not to touch the subject in the foreseeable future. Explaining this decision, the delegate argued that “forcing the Portuguese side to initiate talks about colonization (...) would be purposeless and harmful.”¹⁰⁰ At the same time, Perłowski believed that Warsaw’s silence was emboldening Lisbon to take a further step that would bring about negative consequences for the Poles already settled in Angola and for Polish trade with Angola. He therefore supplied Portuguese diplomats with assurances of Poland’s disinterest in taking advantage of the “colonial clause.”¹⁰¹ Perłowski’s assurances, however, did not deter Ribeiro de Mello from interpreting them as Poland’s resignation from the “colonial clause” altogether. In order to avoid the impression of a complete surrender, on March 18, 1931 the Polish delegate informed Fernando Branco, Portugal’s foreign minister, that his government was still interested in pursuing negotiations anticipated in the agreement from December 28, 1929. Nonetheless, Perłowski stated that Warsaw would consider returning to the topic only after the Portuguese government’s adoption of a new statute regulating the status of foreigners in Angola.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Perłowski, “Nr 231/31. W sprawie klauzuli o Angoli i wystąpienia p. de Mello,” 3.

⁹⁸ Władysław Schwarzburg-Günther, “Nr P.IV.288/31,” January 23, 1931, 65010/3.5, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA; “F. Lindley to the British Embassy in Lisbon,” January 17, 1931, 2–3, FO 371/15758, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.). Note that colonial activists did perceive Stanisław Skarżyński’s flight around Africa as useful for their propaganda. See Stanisław Zieliński, *Mały słownik pionierów polskich kolonialnych i morskich: podróżnicy, odkrywcy, zdobywcy, badacze, eksploratorzy, emigranci-pamiętnikarze, działacze i pisarze migracyjni* (Warsaw: Liga Morska i Kolonialna, 1933), 479–81.

⁹⁹ Perłowski, “Nr 231/31. W sprawie klauzuli o Angoli i wystąpienia p. de Mello.”

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 6–7.

¹⁰² “Jan Perłowski to Fernando Augusto Branco,” March 18, 1931, 65010/3.5, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

Despite this Polish attempt to alleviate the tension, a week later Branco answered that Portugal would rather not begin any negotiations whatsoever.¹⁰³

Notwithstanding his embroilment in the affair and earlier skepticism, Perłowski did not consider the Polish chances of exerting influence in Angola too diminished. By the end of March 1931, he reported to Zaleski that he had expressed Warsaw's discontent with Mello's "unacceptable unilateral oral declaration concerning the amending of a written bilateral agreement."¹⁰⁴ He notified Zaleski that Branco and his general secretary looked embarrassed about the incident and suggested that Mello's bitter disposition toward Polish diplomats might have resulted from Warsaw's failure to give him a Polish state decoration. Consequently, Perłowski advised Zaleski to give Mello satisfaction and maintained that it was only the current political climate that prevented the Portuguese government from opening Angola to inevitable foreign penetration.¹⁰⁵ Still, in September 1931 Perłowski described the new statute regulating the status of foreigners in the colonies, which the Portuguese government was in the process of adopting, as "possessed by a spirit of extreme Portuguese nationalism": it was to stipulate, for example, that foreigners could not purchase land close to port cities.¹⁰⁶ This new statute was eventually passed by Salazar's nationalist government in November 1933.¹⁰⁷ By December 1934, the law not only required foreign immigrants to Angola to deposit 50,000 angolars in a local bank and to pay fees called *titule de residencia* during a period of five years, but also prohibited them from settling closer than 10 km to any of their countrymen.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ "Fernando Augusto Branco to Jan Perłowski," March 25, 1931, 65010/3.5, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹⁰⁴ Jan Perłowski, "Nr 900/31. Sprawa klauzuli kolonizacyjnej i sprawy wewnętrzne Portugalii," March 31, 1931, 1, 65010/3.5, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹⁰⁵ Perłowski, "Nr 900/31. Sprawa klauzuli kolonizacyjnej i sprawy wewnętrzne Portugalii."

¹⁰⁶ Jan Perłowski, "Nr 2103/30 w sprawie kolonizacji Angoli," September 15, 1931, 2, 65010/3.5, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹⁰⁷ "14/Pr/1. Portugalski Statut Kolonialny," January 1934, 65010/3.8, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹⁰⁸ Nowak, *Across the Dark Continent. Bicycle Diaries from Africa 1931-1936*, 260.

As the Polish-Portuguese debacle unfolded, it was German machinations that Perłowski blamed for Polish diplomats' failure to support the ZPK's designs. In fact, Berlin did fear that Poland's trade treaty with Portugal could lead to the elimination of German intermediaries from Poland's trade with Portuguese Africa.¹⁰⁹ In September 1931, Perłowski wrote to the Brühl Palace that German agents immediately leaked the news of the "colonial clause" to the Portuguese public as soon as it reached Berlin.¹¹⁰ According to Perłowski, it was the German envoy in Lisbon, Albert von Balligand, who played a role in disseminating harmful rumors after learning the news from Portuguese merchants.¹¹¹ Balligand was likely involved not only in anti-Polish sabotage but in smuggling ethnic Germans into Angola. In his account published in 1929, Jerzy Chmielewski had already mentioned that many Germans, unable to enter Angola with Reich passports, infiltrated it as Polish citizens.¹¹² In a similar vein, in January 1931, the British official F. Lindley reported to his superiors in London that rumors circulated about thousands of Poles intending to settle in the colony. After hearing the gossip, Lindley reported, the foreign minister Fernando Branco expressed his fears that "Polish settlers" might actually be ethnic Germans with whom the Reich might infiltrate Angola.¹¹³ Moreover, Lindley reported that before his death Balligand had mentioned something about Germans from the "Polish Corridor" settling in "less populous portions of Africa" to a Portuguese official.¹¹⁴ In February 1931, the German foreign minister Julius Curtius denied any such scheme in a conversation with the British ambassador in Berlin, Horace Rumbold.¹¹⁵ Balligand himself was murdered in June 1930. There was apparently no

¹⁰⁹ Busch, "German Diplomatic Post in Lisbon to Wilhelmstrasse," February 21, 1930, RAV Warschau 57, PAAA.

¹¹⁰ Perłowski, "Nr 231/31. W sprawie klauzuli o Angoli i wystąpienia p. de Mello."

¹¹¹ Perłowski, "Nr 2103/30 w sprawie kolonizacji Angoli," 1.

¹¹² Chmielewski, *Angola. Notatki z podróży po Afryce*, 130.

¹¹³ "F. Lindley to the British Embassy in Lisbon," 1.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹⁵ "Horace Rumbold to the Foreign Office," February 13, 1931, FO 371/15758, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

political motive for the crime since the killer, ironically carrying the Polish surname of Piechowski, was declared insane by the Portuguese authorities.¹¹⁶

Warsaw decided to respond to the Germans in both institutional and cultural ways. In August 1931, Tadeusz Nieduszyński, an employee of the Polish Legation in Madrid, informed the Brühl Palace that Poles in Angola lacked a diplomatic “point of support” that would help them fight “hostile attitudes that German elements purposely provoked against us.”¹¹⁷ In consequence, an honorary consulate was soon established in Benguela, with accreditation over most Portuguese possessions in Africa.¹¹⁸ Moreover, Polish diplomats took concrete steps to counter what they perceived as German propaganda. Most dramatically, the Poles reacted to anonymous allegations of Polish illiteracy and poor hygiene appearing in Portuguese papers. In July 1932, Rita Zilberman, a Portuguese-born Jewish secretary of the Polish Legation in Lisbon, authored an article in defense of Poland, in which she made questionable claims about its achievements:

“Poland belongs to the few countries of Europe with no illiterates. The school education in Poland is a requirement imposed by law in such a way that no one can avoid education without incurring penalty sanctions. (...) Poland is a country of great civilization and culture with a highly developed social movement, allowing blue-collar workers and farmers to belong to their respective associations, where they can explain and discuss their problems. Their resolutions are always forwarded to the Government to be considered by proper authorities (...) Across Europe, America etc., Poles are known for their hygiene and are regarded as very neat people. The Polish people are accustomed

¹¹⁶ “Assassin Is Held Insane,” *Madera Tribune*, June 10, 1930.

¹¹⁷ Tadeusz Nieduszyński to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, August 28, 1931, 2/322/4090, MSZ (1918-1939), AAN.

¹¹⁸ See, for example, “Manuel de Barroso Mendes to the Polish Legation in Lisbon,” June 29, 1934, 65010/11.43, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

to cleanliness and hygiene in such a way that facilitates the defense of the country from different epidemics coming from all parts of Europe...”¹¹⁹

Although the ZPK did not intend for Polish peasants or workers to emigrate to Angola, reserving the area for the elites to undertake colonial pioneering, the description of the whole nation as friendly to the lower classes, and therefore “civilized,” was nevertheless in place.

Zilberman offered an excessively defensive response to anti-Polish accusations while underplaying the educational norms of other European countries. In fact, quickly the Polish secretary’s claims about Poles exceeding Western standards of civilization also turned into attacks against Germans:

“Once Angola is colonized by Germans, it will lose its land in favor of Germany. Germany is a devouring country [*um país devorador*]. A German colonization in Angola is a special danger for Portugal, but also for England and France. Only immigrants from countries that do not aspire to create their [own] colonies should colonize Angola. Poland is one of the best countries for this purpose. It has no colonial aspirations, and it is an agricultural country with all the advantages to generate wealth in Angola, as it has already done in Brazil, Argentina, and elsewhere.”¹²⁰

At the end of the day, as diplomatic measures and economic incentives failed, Warsaw’s only hope for persuading the Portuguese to support Polish settlement in Angola remained to double down on the promotion of Poland as a politically innocuous and cultured Western nation, in contrast to Germany. Not only the government but also companies interested in Angola understood the importance of this approach. In 1932, for example, the Polish trade partnership “AFRA Eksport-

¹¹⁹ Zilberman, “Se o Imigrante Polaco e Bom Ou Não Colono Para Angola,” 1.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1–2.

Import Kolonialny” expressed an interest in establishing “factories” in Lobito and Luanda, communicating that its dealings in Angola would be “about commercial action only” as opposed to “clandestine activities.”¹²¹

Geopolitical Disadvantages: Ideological Conflicts and Personal Quibbles in Quipeio

It seems that the Germans exploited the disunity of the Polish settlement around Quipeio to pursue their geopolitical aim of removing Poland from Angola. In the first place, Polish settlers expressed more interest in creating their own Polish utopias in a colonial setting and in making money than in serving as agents to the Polish state, which found itself mediating between warring parties of its citizens around Quipeio. In a lengthy report concerning Poland’s economic opportunities in the Portuguese possession, a Polish governmental expert wrote that “Poles in Angola allowed themselves to become prey to people of bad will,” namely other Poles.¹²² Indeed, the Tarnowski investment group, for example, complained to Perłowski that Kazimierz Zagórski, “a man of a certain reputation in Warsaw,” often alleviated the duties of the Portuguese honorary consul in Poland, Klemens Skalski. Zagórski was to have used his deputy’s position to advertise a dubious partnership responsible for the harmful rumors of mass emigration to Angola.¹²³ Zagórski was the brother of Władysław Zagórski, a Polish general critical of Piłsudski and famous for disappearing in unexplained circumstances.¹²⁴ The implication was, therefore, that Kazimierz aided the Germans in their anti-Polish propaganda in revenge for the possible murder of his

¹²¹ “AFRA Eksport-Import Kolonialny to the Polish Legation in Madrid,” October 4, 1932, 4, 65010/3.6, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹²² “Memoriał p. Radzyńskiego,” May 1, 1931, 39–40, 65010/3.5, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹²³ “Tadeusz Szol to Jan Perłowski,” January 27, 1931, 65010/3.5, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA. Zagórski seemed to have a universally negative reputation. Kazimierz Nowak described him as a “beast rich of venereal diseases”: “Kazimierz Nowak to Maria Nowak,” September 17, 1935, 395, Nowak III.

¹²⁴ See Jerzy Rawicz, *Generał Zagórski zaginął: z tajemnic lat międzywojennych* (Książka i Wiedza, 1963).

brother.¹²⁵

During the geopolitically tense decade of the 1930s, accusing one another of espionage and improper behavior was the pastime of the Polish community at Quibeio. In a letter to Perłowski, the Polish planters Wiesław Kłobukowski and Roman Jesionowski expressed concerns that a team of Polish engineers sent to explore Angola associated themselves with a certain disreputable man, Eustachy Jelski. Moreover, making their stay in the Portuguese colony ever more regrettable in the eyes of their compatriots, the engineers had supposedly left Angola without paying their debts to a couple of Portuguese merchants.¹²⁶ Kłobukowski and Jesionowski complained to Perłowski that Poles themselves contributed to rumors of Poland's malevolent intentions in Angola as they denounced one another as spies.¹²⁷ In particular, Jesionowski wrote about one Włodzimierz (Vladimir?) Prydatko, identified as a Russian émigré of Romanian citizenship and as engaged to the daughter of his neighbor, Tadeusz Gebethner. He reported to the Polish delegate that after the engagement had been broken, Gebethner denounced Prydatko to the Portuguese authorities as a Polish agent from Warsaw, which supposedly prompted Jesionowski to intervene in the affair on behalf of his neighbor's would-be-son-in-law.¹²⁸ At the same time, Jesionowski's partner, Kłobukowski, assured Perłowski that neither of them spread any harmful rumors and instead blamed German "adversaries" for providing false information to local officials and journalists from Benguela.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Interestingly enough, during World War II the British accused him of being a German spy, pointing out his interest in photographing Polish pilots in Belgian Congo: M. Załęski, "Notatka dla Biura Personalnego M.S.Z.," February 18, 1943, 59003/132.20, MSZ, HILA.

¹²⁶ "Wiesław Kłobukowski and Roman Jesionowski to Jan Perłowski," March 15, 1932, 65010/3.6, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA; "Wiesław Kłobukowski to Jan Perłowski," June 24, 1932, 65010/3.6, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹²⁷ "Roman Jesionowski to Jan Perłowski," September 25, 1932, 4, 65010/3.6, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹²⁸ "Roman Jesionowski to Jan Perłowski," September 28, 1932, 1–2, 65010/3.6, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹²⁹ "Wiesław Kłobukowski to Jan Perłowski," March 24, 1931, 65010/3.5, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

Jesionowski's more ideological arguments with fellow settlers made his life difficult, too. In desperate letters sent to Perłowski, the Polish planter informed the delegate of his dramatic situation that had little to do with Germans or Portuguese. Sabotaging his efforts to bring his *fazenda* to a "proper fruition"¹³⁰ was, according to him, Tadeusz Gebethner, whom Jesionowski accused of burning his toolshed and costing him a fortune. He also described Zamoyski and Tadeusz Dekański as hostile toward him, as the two offered to hire an attorney for Gebethner in case of a lawsuit. Jesionowski identified jealousy as the reason for the alleged criminal act: his *fazenda* was supposed to be better than Gebethner's.¹³¹ Still, the real reason for the antagonism was likely the political differences between the men, as Jesionowski charged Gebethner with Bolshevik sympathies and recalled him cursing Piłsudski as a "bandit and traitor of the fatherland."¹³² In addition, Jesionowski accused Tadeusz Barski, Gebethner's partner and his daughter's new fiancé, of assaulting him and claimed that Barski was about to be deported from Angola for his communist beliefs.¹³³ Lastly, it was Jesionowski's past service as an officer of the First Brigade of the Polish Legions that supposedly provoked Gebethner and Barski to launch their attacks.¹³⁴

The floating accusations did not endear the Portuguese authorities to the Polish settlers, whose situation was becoming volatile amid the Polish-Portuguese row over the "colonial clause." In July 1931, Kłobukowski wrote from Huambo that his and Jesionowski's farming concessions of 3 sq. km each, where they intended to grow tobacco and coffee, had been withdrawn because the new law required farmers of the same nationality not to settle closer than 10 km from one

¹³⁰ "Roman Jesionowski to Jan Perłowski," October 18, 1932, 1, 65010/3.6, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹³¹ "Roman Jesionowski to Jan Perłowski," September 25, 1932, 1–3.

¹³² "Roman Jesionowski to Jan Perłowski," October 18, 1932, 3.

¹³³ "Roman Jesionowski to Jan Perłowski," September 25, 1932, 1–3.

¹³⁴ "Roman Jesionowski to Jan Perłowski," September 28, 1932, 4.

another.¹³⁵ Asked to vacate their premises, the Polish planters appealed to Perłowski to intervene on their behalf, claiming that they had occupied the land legally, having received the initial permission before the regulation was passed.¹³⁶ Kłubukowski left Angola in the fall of 1932, leaving his partner to deal with the issue alone.¹³⁷ Jesionowski followed suit in the following year, with the intention of returning, but his troubles did not end. In May 1934, he wrote from Warsaw that demarcation signs had been taken off his *fazenda*, possibly at the instigation of his former Polish neighbors, which prompted Manuel de Barroso Mendes, Poland's honorary consul in Benguela, to intervene with the Portuguese.¹³⁸ In October 1934, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote an affidavit testifying to Jesionowski's possessions in Angola, which was supposed to help his efforts.¹³⁹

It is difficult to trust Jesionowski's correspondence fully, since the planter seemed to be at loggerheads with virtually every Pole in the area, including with his former helping hand, Tadeusz Trębicki, whom he accused of stealing from the *fazenda*.¹⁴⁰ Zamoyski wrote to his father in March 1933, probably referring to Jesionowski, that a "little countryman" (*rodaczek*) of his filed an anonymous complaint against him with the Portuguese police, charging him with spying for a foreign power. The count claimed that the case was immediately dismissed, and that the accuser was a complete "madman" (*wariat*) and yet a harmful one. Moreover, Zamoyski mentioned that Gebethner could say more about their "countrymen."¹⁴¹ Notwithstanding any reservations about Jesionowski's credibility, his articulation of his stay in Angola was telling. Jesionowski assured

¹³⁵ "Wiesław Kłubukowski to Jan Perłowski," July 19, 1931, 3, 65010/3.5, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹³⁷ "Jan Perłowski to Roman Jesionowski," November 28, 1932, 65010/3.6, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹³⁸ "Roman Jesionowski to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," May 25, 1934, 65010/11.43, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA; "Manuel de Barroso Mendes to the Polish Legation in Lisbon."

¹³⁹ Marian Szumlakowski, "Zaświadczenie," October 1934, 65010/11.43, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹⁴⁰ "Roman Jesionowski to Jan Perłowski," September 25, 1932, 6.

¹⁴¹ "Michał Zamoyski to his father," March 5, 1933, 35/84/208, Archiwum Ordynacji Zamoyskich w Kozłówce, APL.

Perłowski that he had not brought any shame to Poland. As proof of his pioneering aptitude, he claimed possession of two stone buildings, a mill, a garage for his car, and a total of 0.9 sq. km of farmland and orchards.¹⁴² In January 1933, announcing that he was going to leave Angola, Jesionowski wrote that he had “fulfilled the duties of a Pole flawlessly” by maintaining his *fazenda* and cultivating a good relationship with the Portuguese authorities.¹⁴³ One can wonder what exactly the “duties of a Pole” entailed in Angola, but they seemed to imply running an efficient plantation and defending Poland’s good name.

The fragmentary nature of the sources makes it difficult to determine all the motivations and ideas behind the Polish settlement in Angola. It seems, however, that Zamoyski and his entourage cared more about creating a morally and fiscally conservative center of an alternative “Poland,” which mostly implied living simply and making money, than about fulfilling any duties to the state-allied ZPK. Likewise, despite being labeled “communists,” Gebethners and Dekański, likely economic migrants, maintained ironically good relations with the aristocrat Zamoyski and did not seem to care about serving as economic and political liaisons for the Polish state, either. The only settler remotely dedicated to the cause of establishing an extension of the Polish state in Angola was Jesionowski, the self-professed Piłsudskiite, which might suggest that support for the authoritarian Polish state corresponded to support for the official vision of the “colonial action” in Angola. At the same time, most of the Polish quibbles resulted from rather personal animosities, as power and influence seemed to matter as much as the transplanted ideological division between the Polish “right” imagining a Polish-Catholic nation in line with the “Piast” model and the Polish “left” proposing the more open “Jagiellonian” definition. In any case, however, the Polish settlement’s independence from the state, as well as its internal conflicts, exposed the project to

¹⁴² “Roman Jesionowski to Jan Perłowski,” September 25, 1932, 5.

¹⁴³ “Roman Jesionowski to Jan Perłowski,” January 10, 1933, 2, 65010/3.7, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

German propaganda and contributed to the ZPK's inability to use Quipeio as its economic base in West Africa.

Turning toward the French Empire: The Primacy of Economics



Figure 8. Ferdynand Ossendowski receiving flowers upon his return from Africa. He was generally a fan of French colonialism in the interwar period. Source: 1-K-1723.

Amid the failed attempt to use individual emigrants in order to participate in Portuguese colonialism in Angola, the LMiK turned to the French Empire, which it viewed as an area where more commerce-centered and state-supported “colonial actions” could be carried out. France, which emerged out of World War I as one of the mightiest empires in the world, was viewed as a less unpredictable colonial partner than “weak” and “insecure” Portugal. Moreover, France was also the only major power that supported Poland as

a bulwark against Germany and Soviet-sponsored communism in eastern Europe.¹⁴⁴

The Polish appreciation of the French translated into the colonial milieu's frequent identification of French colonialism as a model to follow. In 1926, for example, Ferdynand Ossendowski and his wife Zofia led an expedition to the region of the Niger and Chad Rivers in French West Africa with the aim of studying the area anthropologically.¹⁴⁵ In his report from the journey, Ossendowski praised France for accepting Africans as citizens and for pursuing

¹⁴⁴ Concerning Polish-French relations in the early 1930s, see, for example, Mariusz Wołos, *Alfred Chtapowski (1874-1940): biografia ambasadora Polski we Francji* (Adam Marszałek, 2001).

¹⁴⁵ Ferdynand Antoni Ossendowski, *Wśród Czarnych* (Lwów: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1927), 3.

humanitarian policies that kept communism at bay in the colonies.¹⁴⁶ (Figure 8) In turn, the French appreciated Ossendowski's embrace of their version of colonialism, taking steps to help him along the way.¹⁴⁷ Likewise, in 1930 Tadeusz Kiełpiński, a Kraków-based academic, was to examine the natural and social environment of Algeria, from Oran to Tamanrasset. The Polish consulate in Marseille supported Kiełpiński's expedition, during which the alleged similarity between Poland's role as a bulwark of Christianity in Europe and France's role as a civilizing agent in Africa was to be underlined.¹⁴⁸ Occasionally, the French reciprocated and invited their Polish allies to position themselves as their partners. For instance, they encouraged an association called "France-Pologne" to arrange a trip of students from Poland to Algeria to introduce them to "France's civilizing effort" and to turn them into inadvertent promoters of limited Polish immigration to the Maghreb, which would help develop the region economically.¹⁴⁹ In fact, the Quai d'Orsay was interested in attracting "non-Germanic ethnic elements of central Europe" to migrate to North Africa, hoping that they would assimilate completely, in contrast to "Latin" settlers.¹⁵⁰

In the meantime, the possibility of establishing trade between Poland and French colonies emerged. Warsaw had signed a trade treaty with Paris already in 1922, which, for political rather than economic reasons, granted all French colonial products (e.g. coffee, cacao, cotton) the greatest tariff privilege. France did not grant Poland any national tariff privileges in return, which meant that any Polish merchants looking to import goods directly from French colonies did so at the same

¹⁴⁶ Ferdynand Antoni Ossendowski, *Niewolnicy Słońca* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Polskie, 1927), 231.

¹⁴⁷ "Quai d'Orsay to the Ministry of Colonies," June 23, 1926, 57CPCOM/5, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

¹⁴⁸ Tadeusz Kiełpiński, "Ogólny szkic ekspedycji saharyjskiej," December 1929, 2/464/2/298, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

¹⁴⁹ "Note pour la sous-direction d'Afrique-Levant. Voyage d'étudiants polonais en Afrique du Nord," October 7, 1929, 53CPCOM/55, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

¹⁵⁰ "Quai d'Orsay to Lucien Saint, the General Resident of France in Rabat," October 19, 1929, 53CPCOM/55, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

rates as everyone else.¹⁵¹ At the same time, although many export opportunities to the French metropole existed, France simply did not need to import large amounts of Polish signature goods such as rye.¹⁵² Orlicz-Dreszer, a graduate of an economic program in Le Havre, was aware of the problems in Poland's trade with French colonies. In January 1932 the chairman of the LMiK submitted a memorandum to the prime minister's cabinet, outlining his colonial program of consolidating emigrants in a limited number of locations, eliminating Western intermediaries, and constructing additional ships for the merchant marine and navy.¹⁵³ He pointed out that the multiplying immigration restrictions around the world justified the Polish state's need for a transition from emigration to colonial policies, or from "economic emigration" (*emigracja zarobkowa*) to "settlement emigration" (*emigracja osadnicza*).¹⁵⁴ In addition, Orlicz-Dreszer proposed new initiatives of economic expansion in French colonies, for example establishing a state-sponsored company for activating trade and promoting colonial pioneering in West Africa.¹⁵⁵

Despite Orlicz-Dreszer's talk of emigration, the French Empire was viewed as an area of colonial expansion in a more commercial sense than Angola, which was only considered a destination for wealthier Poles. In April 1932, following Orlicz-Dreszer's January memorandum, the LMiK sent a delegation to Paris to hold unofficial talks about commerce with the Colonial Institute of France (*Institut Colonial de la France*).¹⁵⁶ At the same time, Stanisław Pawłowski pitched the potential of Gdynia for operating trade with the French colonies to the Ministry of

¹⁵¹ "Raport ekonomiczny za rok 1928. Stosunki handlowe polsko-francuskie," 1928, 6–9, I.303.4.7447, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego, CAW WBH.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁵³ Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer, "Zarys akcji kolonialnej i kolonizacyjnej polskiej na terenach Ameryki Południowej oraz francuskich kolonii afrykańskich," January 1932, 1–2, 2/8/6/72-1, Akta Grupowe 1932-1939, Prezydium Rady Ministrów w Warszawie, AAN.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 4–6.

¹⁵⁶ "Embassy in Paris to the Consulate in Marseille," April 22, 1932, 2/464/3/335, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

Foreign Affairs in Paris.¹⁵⁷ The French did not seem interested in tightening trade relations in Poland, however, naming the aspirational character of the Polish overtures as one of the reasons for their hesitance. Already in July 1928, a French official had noted that a German article published in Frankfurt was a reprint from the Polish daily *Gazeta Warszawska*, in which Jan Rozwadowski called for the transformation of former German colonies into Polish mandates during a potential reshuffling of mandatory powers in 1931. In response, the Frenchman remarked that “one can consider these pretensions fantastical and the arguments by which they are supported amazingly infantile,” but “in reality, a number of Poles ruminate about similar ideas, which makes it necessary to take account of them.”¹⁵⁸ In 1933, in response to the invitation of Cameroon and Togo to the Poznań Trade Fair, a French commissioner reminded a colleague of his that, for political reasons, French mandates should not figure at the fair as independent states.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, the Polish attempts to penetrate French colonies did not fare well in the early 1930s. In order to eliminate the German intermediaries that sold Polish salt to French colonies in West Africa, the Polish Consulate in Marseille, for example, started a cooperation with a French company called “Ellie Bitbol” that would replace the Germans.¹⁶⁰ The cooperation was riddled with petty difficulties, however, such as the failure to exhibit Polish salt samples at the Paris Colonial Exposition of 1931.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Stanisław Pawłowski, “La Pologne et les colonies françaises. Le port de Gdynia,” 1932, 110COL 854/2304, Agence économique de la France d’outre-mer, Ministère des Colonies, ANOM.

¹⁵⁸ “Aspirations coloniales polonaises,” July 16, 1928, 100 APOM 640, Comité central français pour l’Outre-Mer, Archives privées, ANOM.

¹⁵⁹ “French Commissioner of Cameroon to Yaounde,” January 24, 1933, 110COL 854/2304, Agence économique de la France d’outre-mer, Ministère des Colonies, ANOM.

¹⁶⁰ “Witold Obrębski to the State Export Institute,” March 1933, 2/464/2/105, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

¹⁶¹ “Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Consulate in Marseille,” May 5, 1931, 2/464/2/105, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

Still, the French government slowly recognized the role of German intermediaries and the benefits of promoting direct trade between its colonies and Poland. In addition, the French participated in their own geopolitical competition with the Germans, since Berlin continued to expand economically in its former colonies in West Africa (Togo, Cameroon), now under French and British mandate, in the hope of reacquiring them in the future.¹⁶² In 1931, a French memorandum blamed insufficient interest in the potential of the Polish market, maladaptation of products to the Polish clientele, defective organization of trade, and disadvantageous geographic factors for the dearth of colonial trade with Poland. Although Rotterdam and London had replaced Hamburg and Bremen as Poland's transfer ports for colonial shipments, the French Empire did not benefit from the change.¹⁶³ By September 1933, the French considered lobbying the Polish government to pressure Polish merchants to choose French intermediaries instead of their German rivals, in particular with regard to trade with West Africa.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, one of the French objectives for a new trade treaty with Poland was to secure advantageous tariffs for French colonial products, in particular for rum.¹⁶⁵ Partly thanks to the changing French attitude, by the end of 1934 Polish merchants established direct contact with French companies in North Africa, in particular in import-friendly Morocco, and started to establish their own representations, contributing to an increase in trade with the region, which featured Polish products ranging from meat to furniture.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² For a full story of German colonial revisionism directed against France, see Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁶³ "Pologne. Le Marché de produits coloniaux," 1931, 21, 100 APOM 640, Comité central français pour l'Outre-Mer, Archives privées, ANOM.

¹⁶⁴ "Négociations avec la Pologne. Oleagineux et cacaos en provenance de l'oest-africain," September 1933, 100 APOM 640, Comité central français pour l'Outre-Mer, Archives privées, ANOM.

¹⁶⁵ "Marie Brizard & Roger to the Union Coloniale Française," September 15, 1933, 100 APOM 640, Comité central français pour l'Outre-Mer, Archives privées, ANOM.

¹⁶⁶ "Sprawozdanie ekonomiczne," March 19, 1935, 2/322/3825, MSZ, AAN.

Opening West Africa

By April 1934, acting upon Orlicz-Dreszer's memorandum from January 1932, the LMiK took measures to establish direct trade with French West Africa and other colonies in the region. In particular, Janusz Makarczyk and Jan Dmochowski, an employee of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, toured the coast of West Africa to examine the absorption capacities of local markets, ranging from French Guinea and Sierra Leone to Liberia and Togo.¹⁶⁷ Orlicz-Dreszer claimed that Makarczyk and Dmochowski had consulted with the Consular Department at the Brühl Palace about the trip. In any case, in many port cities of the region, the Polish delegation signed preliminary trade agreements with local merchants.¹⁶⁸ In response to the positive outcome of this reconnaissance, the LMiK decided to purchase its own ship to carry cargo to West Africa in cooperation with the State Export Institute and the "Kompania Handlu Zamorskiego." The envisioned craft was supposed to regularly circulate between Poland and West Africa, thus inaugurating a new Polish-African line. The LMiK was to run the connection as a non-profit, allowing Polish merchants to bypass Western intermediaries without incurring additional expenses. The targeted products to be imported from West Africa included cotton, coffee, and cocoa.¹⁶⁹ The Colonial Action Fund was to sponsor the maiden voyage of the ship, with the LMiK collecting money for the purpose from the wealthiest donors among merchants and industrialists.¹⁷⁰

The LMiK selected Makarczyk to head the commission charged with purchasing the ship destined for West Africa. After touring a couple of ports, Makarczyk's commission found what it deemed as an appropriate ship in Kiel, Germany. Originally called "Cap Nord" and renamed

¹⁶⁷ Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer and Wiesław Czermiński, "LMiK to the Interministerial Commission for the Support of Export," August 27, 1934, 2/504/5/60, Konsulat Generalny RP w Londynie, AAN.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ "The executive board of the LMiK in Poznań to its counterpart in Gniezno," October 24, 1934, I.391.49, Organizacje Paramilitarne, CAW WBH.



Figure 9. The "Elemka" at sea. The ship proved to be an unfortunate investment. Source: NAC 1-P-304-1.

"Elemka" after the LMiK's acronym,¹⁷¹

she was a five-mast motorized schooner capable of carrying 240 tons of cargo.¹⁷²

(Figure 9) The cost of the "Elemka" was projected at 180,000 zł (~\$34,000), more than half of which was supposed to come from the Polish government.¹⁷³

As it soon turned out, however, the ship

was doomed to failure from day one. Despite the weather prediction suggesting the contrary, the Gdynia-bound "Elemka" encountered a storm in the Baltic, which damaged its motors. Consequently, the ship had to be moored in the port of Sessnitz and subsequently towed to the shipyard in Gdańsk for repairs.¹⁷⁴ As a result, the total cost of the "Elemka" turned out to be 230,000 zł (~\$44,000), which infuriated the Polish public that accused the LMiK of overpaying for a "piece of garbage" (*gruchot*).¹⁷⁵ Incapable of undertaking any mission to West Africa, the "Elemka" was used to transport cement and iron plates to Jaffa, Haifa, and Alexandria in the spring of 1935, which also proved to be an unfortunate undertaking since inclement weather damaged the ship once again and turned the cement into concrete.¹⁷⁶ By April 1939 the "Elemka" was sold to an American, who then sold it back to the Germans.¹⁷⁷ Meanwhile, the LMiK's failure to acquire

¹⁷¹ "Sprawa żeglowca motorowego 'ELEMKA,'" n.d., I.391.49, Organizacje Paramilitarne, CAW WBH.

¹⁷² Orlicz-Dreszer and Czermiński, "LMiK to the Interministerial Commission for the Support of Export."

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ "Sprawa żeglowca motorowego 'ELEMKA.'"

¹⁷⁵ "Jeszcze 'Elemka,'" *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, November 13, 1934, 5.

¹⁷⁶ Woźniak, "Gdynia-Aleksandria," *Morze*, no. 8–9 (1935): 26–27; Wacław Szybalski, interview by Piotr Puchalski, 2015, 1411, University of Wisconsin Archives and Records.

¹⁷⁷ "Protokół Nr 1/39 z posiedzenia Rady Głównej Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej, odbytego w Warszawie w lokalu Zarządu Głównego LMK, przy uk. Widok 10," April 2, 1939, 9, 2/322/9849, MSZ, AAN.

its own signature ship forced the Poles to charter a steamer called SS “Poznań” from the state subsidiary “Żegluga Polska.”¹⁷⁸

The “Elemka” debacle was only one sign that the LMiK-directed “pioneering voyage” to West Africa was merely a test of the Polish capacity to trade with West Africa directly. In a letter to a local emigration official in Łódź, the State Export Institute pointed out that despite the mission being an “experiment,” Polish textile producers should still be encouraged to participate.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, despite the support that it was receiving from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the process of preparing for the mission was rather improvised. In September 1934, the “Kompania Handlu Zamorskiego” not only asked the Polish Consulate in Marseille about the rules and regulations concerning customs and tariffs in West Africa but also inquired about local banks and coal storage facilities in the respective ports.¹⁸⁰ The response of the consul, Witold Obrębski, consisted mostly of references to existing publications but also underlined that Ivory Coast and Dahomey (today’s Benin) applied no tariffs to foreign trade.¹⁸¹ Notwithstanding the spontaneity, the LMiK managed to dispatch the steamship SS “Poznań” to West Africa at the end of December 1934.¹⁸² This Polish mission to West Africa, however, was not purely a commercial endeavor intended to open the French Empire to direct trade with Poland but a symptom of a new approach to colonial expansion discussed in the next chapter.

¹⁷⁸ Zygmunt Dreszer, *Pionierski rejs: dziennik podróży handlowej do portów Afryki Zachodniej* (Warsaw: Liga Morska i Kolonialna, 1936), 5–7.

¹⁷⁹ “State Export Institute to an Emigration Official in Łódź,” September 28, 1934, 2/464/2/22, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

¹⁸⁰ “Kompania Handlu Zamorskiego to the Polish Consulate in Marseille,” September 19, 1934, 2/464/2/22, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

¹⁸¹ “Witold Obrębski to the Kompania Handlu Zamorskiego,” September 1934, 2/464/2/22, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

¹⁸² Dreszer, *Pionierski rejs: dziennik podróży handlowej do portów Afryki Zachodniej*, 5–7.

Conclusion

The first “colonial action,” carried out under the auspices of the ZPK, was to channel an emigration of wealthy Polish farmers to Angola, where they would supposedly become the Polish state’s economic agents in their role as junior partners in Portuguese colonialism. Warsaw’s initial hands-off approach, however, meant that neither the ZPK nor the Polish government had any control over the selection of the emigrants. In turn, the ideological and economic disunity of the Polish community around the mission of Quipeio exposed it to propaganda attacks from the Germans, which prompted the Portuguese authorities to limit the possibility of Polish expansion in Angola. The colonial milieu defended themselves against accusations of attempting a territorial annexation of Angola by doubling down on the argument that Poland was a cultured nation capable of educating the “natives” and one that could assist Portugal in its colonialism. In this manner, ideology dovetailed with geopolitics, with the former placed in the service of the latter.

In the meantime, as it became apparent that further expansion in Angola would not be possible, the LMiK shifted its focus to the French Empire, where it would allegedly act in a closer cooperation with the Polish state and stress trade rather than emigration. The French did not fail to notice the LMiK’s propaganda, but this time it was expressed in economic rather than cultural terms of progress, hygiene, and education. Likewise, the second “colonial action” was marred by difficulties of an economic rather than culture nature, for example the problem of the selection and purchase of an appropriate ship.

Chapter 4

Prometheus Bound

“The project of economic and cultural expansion in Liberia deserves a high degree of support, and you can hope for my support while in Monrovia. But insofar as our plans are concerned, I warn all lovers of colonial brawls [*awantury*] that my support is limited only to the program of friendly expansion in the spirit of your project. In Poland, there is no room for any dreams of conquest.”¹

In the early 1930s Polish elites abandoned the idea of pioneering new areas for mass settlement as a way to manage the so-called “surplus” Polish-Catholic population. They also failed in their more commercial approach of positioning Poland as a partner in Portuguese colonialism in the hope of economic benefits. By the middle of the decade, however, a new set of opportunities presented itself to them, encouraging a complete shift in the LMiK’s approach to commercial expansion in Africa. The LMiK continued to depict Poland as an innocuous nation. This time, however, it was one of the last independent “black” states that Polish elites promised not to harm while its “pioneers” established local trading posts and plantations to address what they constructed as the problem of Poland’s industrial “backwardness.” As some African leaders themselves asked Poland to defend them against colonialism, the colonial milieu constructed the new question that addressed what their country’s relationship to non-Europeans under Western rule should be. The Liberians, in particular, combated the internationalist form of colonialism emanating from the United States and, in order to fend off the threat to their independence, offered economic incentives to Poland in exchange for international influence and expertise. This chapter examines the LMiK’s “Promethean colonialism” as an imagined answer to both questions, or a program adopted both to “liberate” Liberia (and Haiti) from foreign influence and to drag Poland along the way to maritime

¹ Józef Piłsudski quoted in Edward Ligocki, “Czarne lądy a Polska (I),” *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, March 5, 1937, 3.

modernity.

Liberia's Gambit: Making Overtures to Poland

Liberia (Figure 1), which contemporaries often called the “Black Republic,”² originated as a settlement of former black slaves from the United States. In the first half of the nineteenth

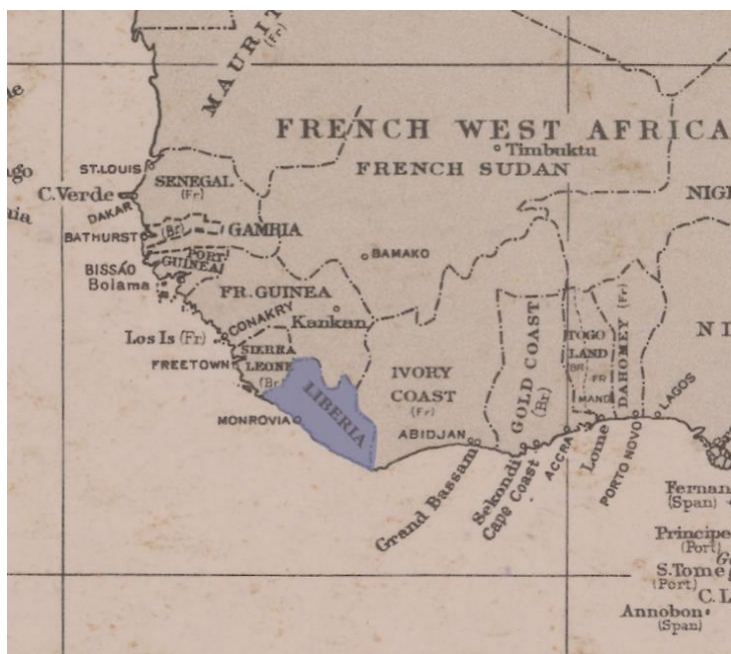


Figure 1. Map showing the location of Liberia in West Africa. Edited from: Hydrographic Office of the U.S. Navy (Public Domain). Copyright of the edited version: Piotr Puchalski.

century, the ostensibly philanthropic American Colonization Society carried out its project of establishing manumitted American slaves along the “Pepper Coast” as a manifestation of the “Back-to-Africa” movement. In 1847, the settlement of these Afro-American colonists centered at Monrovia, a port city erected and named after the U.S. president James

Monroe, was declared an independent nation.³ Today, independent Liberia stretches over 111,369 sq. km and borders the former British colony of Sierra Leone and the former French colonies of Ivory Coast and Guinea. Its topography features both a coastal region of mangrove swamps and sandy beaches along the Atlantic as well as rainforest and plateau regions in the interior.⁴ The territory of what became Liberia, however, was once home to a confederation of local tribes

² Scholars continue to use the term. See, for example, Jyotirmoy Pal Chaudhuri, *Whitehall and the Black Republic: A Study of Colonial Britain's Attitude Towards Liberia, 1914–1939* (Springer, 2018); Ibrahim K. Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slavery, 1914–1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

³ See, for example, James Ciment, *Another America: The Story of Liberia and the Former Slaves Who Ruled It* (Hill and Wang, 2014); J. H. T. McPherson, *History of Liberia* (Feather Trail Press, 2009); David Gene Reese, *Liberia: America's African Stepchild*, 2017.

⁴ Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 49–50.

including the Loma, Gola, Bassa, Dei, Kpelle, Vai, and Gbande, which occasionally engaged in indentured servitude resembling slavery and in “pawning,” or the lending of one’s children to creditors.⁵

Afro-American colonists and their descendants ruled Liberia from its declaration of independence in 1847 until the indigenous revolt of the 1980s. As these settlers arrived from the United States, culture replaced skin color as a marker of distinction, and the Libero-American aristocracy began to carry out a “civilizing mission” to the surrounding areas. By the beginning of the twentieth century the Libero-American campaign to develop the interior rainforest resulted in many indigenous peoples subjected to illegal fines, requisitions, and forced labor at the hands of the infamous Liberian Frontier Force under James W. Cooper.⁶ Moreover, as Monrovia’s desire to control coastal trade increased, its urban elites became involved in protracted military struggles with the Grebo and Kru, two sea-faring and lumber-trading tribal groups native to the Pepper Coast. In the 1920s, the abuse directed against the Kru for their earlier rebellion caused a slavery scandal that incriminated Liberia’s president Charles B.D. King.⁷ Feliks Kopczyński, a Polish agent commissioned by the military intelligence to study Liberia, wrote that King’s program of road construction resulted in forced labor in the interior and in slaves being sold to overseas plantations. Kopczyński reported that “this state of things (...) caused many Liberian citizens to complain to the government of the United States” and pointed out the ironic fact that “Liberia had been created to secure a free country for *murzyni* liberated from slavery.”⁸

In 1929, as a result of an American commission that confirmed the instances of slave trade

⁵ Ibid., 54–59.

⁶ Ibid., 59–64.

⁷ Ibid., 64–78.

⁸ Feliks Kopczyński, *Liberia. Zarys geograficzno-opisowy* (Warsaw: Biblioteka Służby Geograficznej, 1936), 125.

between Liberia and the island of Fernando Po, King resigned as Liberia's president and was replaced with Edwin Barclay (1882–1955) (Figure 2) in the following year. In 1932, Barclay was elected president for a four-year-term.⁹ King's resignation was not the end of the affair, however, since Liberia was at odds with the United States for reasons other than humanitarian. In the 1920s, as European producers of rubber in Southeast Asia made a concerted effort to raise their prices, Liberia became an object of interest to the large American tire-making industry firm under Harvey S. Firestone. In reaction to the creation of European rubber cartels, the American tycoon sponsored the "Harvard Medical African Expedition" under Richard Pearson Strong to tour Liberia in the years 1926–1927. The expedition's ostensible objective was to map the country and examine its natural environment in the context of tropical diseases. In addition, however, Strong and his team tested local conditions for rubber cultivation.¹⁰ In consequence of the Harvard Expedition, Monrovia was pressured to allow Firestone to establish expansive rubber plantations in the interior and to accept a large loan from Firestone's subsidiary, the "American Finance Corporation."¹¹ In the aftermath of the Great Depression and consequent fall of rubber prices, however, Liberia quickly lost the ability to finance its debt to Firestone. Moreover, the American tycoon considered the slavery scandal detrimental to his company's operations in Liberia and took advantage of the situation to squeeze the "Black Republic" financially.¹²

In 1931 Liberia asked the League of Nations for help with dealing with its financial

⁹ Elwood D. Dunn, Amos J. Beyan, and Carl Patrick Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Liberia* (Scarecrow Press, 2000), 33–34.

¹⁰ Gregg Mitman, "Forgotten Paths of Empire: Ecology, Disease, and Commerce in the Making of Liberia's Plantation Economy: President's Address," *Environmental History* 22, no. 1 (2017): 1–22; Martin J. Murray, "'White Gold' or 'White Blood'?: The Rubber Plantations of Colonial Indochina, 1910–40," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 19, no. 3–4 (April 1, 1992): 41–67.

¹¹ F.P.M. van der Kraaij, *The Open Door Policy of Liberia: An Economic History of Modern Liberia* (Bremen, 1983), 12–46.

¹² Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers*, 107–17.

situation and labor crisis. In consequence, the Council of the League delegated the affair to a special Liberia Committee consisting of Germany, Britain, Spain, France, Italy, and Venezuela. Poland was appointed as the *rapporteur* of the Committee, with the authority to release official reports on its deliberations and adjudicate between other members.¹³ Serving as the Polish representative was either the foreign minister himself, August Zaleski (later Józef Beck), or his ambassador in London, Konstanty Skirmunt (later Edward Raczyński). By October 1933 the Committee drafted a “Plan of Assistance” for Liberia, the implementation of which would mean a complete subjugation of the country to the international community and its effective transformation into a Western mandate.¹⁴ According to the plan, the League-commissioned advisors could overrule Liberia’s president. In particular, the financial advisor would have a complete autonomy in deciding Liberia’s financial matters, and the “Black Republic” would be



Figure 2. Edwin Barclay, president of Liberia in the years 1930–1944. Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Digital ID FSA.8D19002.

divided into three provinces under three foreign leaders, each with its own police force.¹⁵

The nefarious character of the “Plan of Assistance” was clear to Edwin Barclay. Despite his participation in King’s government and presumed knowledge of its abuses against indigenous tribesmen, Liberia’s acting president and leader of the establishment True Whig Party was aware that the Western powers targeted

¹³ “August Zaleski to the Embassy in London,” February 19, 1931, 2/503/725, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

¹⁴ “Sprawa pomocy dla Liberii,” September 10, 1935, 2/513/247, Delegacja RP przy Lidze Narodów, AAN.

¹⁵ “General Principles of the Plan of Assistance Drawn Up by the Committee and Accepted by the Liberian Representatives,” October 12, 1932, 4606/5, UWM; Kopczyński, *Liberia. Zarys geograficzno-opisowy*, 128.

Liberia as one of the two remaining independent black states in Africa. The British delegate in Monrovia, A.E. Yapp, described him as suffering from a “‘black complex’”: refusing to appoint white advisors “unless they are subservient to him” and entertaining a “boundless confidence in himself and assuming the character of a dictator.”¹⁶ Still, Yapp also pointed out that Barclay was a “Liberian patriot (...) doing his utmost to rehabilitate Liberia.”¹⁷ In response to the League’s “Plan of Assistance,” Barclay adopted a strategy that one scholar termed “containment policy against colonial take-over,” as his cabinet adopted a customized “plan of assistance,” appointing a selection of financial, sanitation, and health experts to fulfill international expectations on its own terms.¹⁸ Monrovia also searched for sources of investment to strengthen its economy, but feared economic penetration from traditional colonial powers such as Britain and France. As *rapporteur* of the Liberia Committee and a state without colonies, Poland was considered by Liberia’s leaders as its natural partner that could supply it with desired expertise and investments.

In turn, Polish diplomats understood that Liberia was being investigated at the request of the United States and adopted a sympathetic stance toward the “Black Republic.” In February 1931 Washington’s observer of Liberia’s case in Geneva, Prentiss B. Gilbert, confessed to Franciszek Sokal that his country was in a predicament since Monrovia was using its membership in the League of Nations, which the United States had not joined, as leverage against American interests. It was therefore Washington’s intention, Gilbert suggested, to reach a common understanding with Geneva in order to secure American investments in Liberia. In turn, Sokal reported, European diplomats demonstrated understanding for the U.S. campaign against Liberia in the naïve hope of

¹⁶ A.E. Yapp, “Revision of the annual report upon leading personalities in the Republic of Liberia,” April 13, 1936, 2, FO 371/20214, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁷ A.E. Yapp, “Liberia. Annual Report, 1935,” May 7, 1936, 16, FO 371/20214, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁸ Adell Patton, “Liberia and Containment Policy Against Colonial Take-Over: Public Health and Sanitation Reform, 1912-1953,” *Liberian Studies Journal* 30, no. 2 (2005): 40–65.

encouraging the Americans to join the League.¹⁹ In contrast, however, Warsaw noticed similarities between the League's treatment of the "Black Republic" and its earlier treatment of Poland. In February 1931 August Zaleski instructed Ambassador Skirmunt to support Monrovia to fend off any precedent that would later enable the League to meddle in the internal affairs of another member state.²⁰ In turn, Skirmunt lobbied other diplomats to ensure that foreign experts delegated to Liberia would need to cooperate closely with the country's government. Still, the Polish government was not yet interested in becoming more involved in the affair. Skirmunt suggested to Zaleski that, since they lacked experience in the tropics, Warsaw should propose Polish experts to work in Liberia only in order to counterbalance any potential German candidacies.²¹

By the end of 1933, to encourage Poland to take further interest in Liberia, Barclay accepted the services of a Pan-African activist named Léonidas (Léo) Joseph Sajous. According to French intelligence, Sajous had been born in Gonaïves, Haiti on October 29, 1892 and lived in Paris as a dentist. He was active in the left-leaning "Ligue de la défense de la Race nègre" but mostly in order to "augment his clientele" rather than for the sake of revolutionary activity.²² According to another French intelligence report, in February 1930 Sajous initiated a more moderate "Comité Universel de l'Institut Nègre de Paris" designed to educate Africans.²³ According to Tadeusz Schaetzel (1891–1971), a Promethean and erstwhile director of the military intelligence, Sajous claimed to be the Haitian president's brother.²⁴ In any case, Sajous was a

¹⁹ "Franciszek Sokal to Konstanty Skirmunt," February 25, 1931, 2/503/725, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

²⁰ "August Zaleski to the Embassy in London."

²¹ "Konstanty Skirmunt to August Zaleski," March 5, 1931, 2/503/725, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

²² "French Minister of Colonies to Quai d'Orsay," May 5, 1934, 1, 68CPCOM/6, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

²³ "French Minister of the Interior to Louis Barthou," June 4, 1934, 68CPCOM/6, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

²⁴ "Telegram from Tadeusz Schaetzel to the Embassy in Paris," September 25, 1933, 45004/17.3, Ambasada (France), HILA.

staunch opponent of Western colonialism, its internationalist form included, and a friend of Liberia. In 1931 the Haitian helped found a Pan-African bilingual journal called *La Revue du monde noir*, which featured authors associated with the Harlem Renaissance and the Négritude movement. In the first issue, Sajous defended Liberia from international accusations concerning slavery, blaming individual politicians from Monrovia instead, and compared the criticism directed against Liberia to a crusade whose objective was “the enslavement of a free people (...).”²⁵ It is not clear whether Barclay had commissioned Sajous to travel to Poland.²⁶ However, from 1932 to 1933 the Haitian lobbied the Commercial and Industrial Chamber of Poznań to lend money to Monrovia in exchange for trade privileges.²⁷

The Polish government did not wish to associate itself with Sajous directly, understanding that helping Liberia openly would complicate its relations with the Western powers. Instead, the Emigration Division at the Brühl Palace asked the LMiK to conduct any ensuing negotiations with Sajous in tacit coordination with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. In the words of an official at the foreign ministry, the LMiK, “a social organization aiming for Poland’s exterior expansion [was] a more appropriate entity to research and discuss Dr. Sajous’s plans.”²⁸ During a conference in December 1933, the trade minister, Ferdynand Zarzycki, agreed to Janusz Makarczyk and Jan Dmochowski traveling to Liberia only as executors of the LMiK-sponsored “colonial action” in West Africa.²⁹ In effect, the agreement signed in Monrovia on April 28, 1934 was between Makarczyk, representing the LMiK, and Clarence Lorenzo Simpson (1896–1969),

²⁵ Léo Sajous, “Le Libéria en Accusation devant l’Opinion mondiale,” *La Revue du monde noir* 1, no. 1 (1931): 25.

²⁶ In January 1937, a colonial merchant named Zbigniew Heliński credited himself for initiating economic contact with Liberia and awakening Sajous’s interest in Poland’s capacity to help the “Black Republic” in 1932. Zygmunt Heliński, “Curriculum Vitae,” January 1937, 2/322/9740, MSZ, AAN.

²⁷ Teodor Cybulski, “Notatka dla Pana Ministra w sprawie Liberii,” October 8, 1934, 1, A.11.49/3, MSZ, PISM; Kopczyński, *Liberia. Zarys geograficzno-opisowy*, 129.

²⁸ Cybulski, “Notatka dla Pana Ministra w sprawie Liberii,” 1.

²⁹ Ibid.

Barclay's secretary of state, representing Liberia. It was supposed to encourage the two countries to eventually sign a bilateral "Treaty of Friendship." For the time being, the Polish state was not an official contractor. Still, Poland was named Liberia's most privileged business partner, with the LMiK promised trading, farming, and mining concessions in exchange for supplying the "Black Republic" with educational opportunities and expertise assistance in infrastructure, finance, and medicine. In particular, Simpson secured the Polish guarantee of sending economic and sanitary experts to Monrovia so that they could soothe international concerns in these areas.³⁰ The French chargé d'affaires in Monrovia, Eugène Emanuelli, suggested with conviction that Barclay used the LMiK as a cover, since Liberia could not sign treaties with foreign powers without prior consultation with Firestone.³¹

Sajous's overtures to Poland coincided with Barclay's rejection of Geneva's "Plan of Assistance," which increased the danger of foreign intervention. In January 1934 it was the duty of the Polish *rapporteur* to communicate the Liberia Committee's resolve to end all negotiations if an agreement was not reached.³² By May Liberia's countless objections resulted in the Council of the League of Nations considering them an effective rejection.³³ At the same time, British pressure mounted, with foreign minister Anthony Eden reminding the international community of its responsibility to look after indigenous populations (Article 23) and threatening Liberia with expulsion.³⁴ In July, *The Daily Guardian*, a newspaper from Freetown, Sierra Leone, published an

³⁰ "Agreement between the LMiK and Liberia," April 28, 1934, 2/470/2/5, Konsulat Honorowy RP w Monrowii, AAN.

³¹ "Eugène Emanuelli to Louis Barthou," September 10, 1934, 68CPCOM/7, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

³² "Demande d'assistance présentée par le gouvernement du Liberia. Rapport du Représentant de la Pologne," January 19, 1934, 3, R 97172, Liberia, Referat Völkerbund, RZ 209, PAAA.

³³ "Demande d'assistance présentée par le gouvernement du Liberia. Rapport du Représentant de la Pologne," May 17, 1934, R 97172, Liberia, Referat Völkerbund, RZ 209, PAAA.

³⁴ "Sprawa pomocy dla Liberii."

article celebrating Liberia's eighty-seventh birthday, disparaging foreign proclivity to intervene in the country and making a subtle allusion to Poland: "At the same time this republic is being denounced at least one World Power is making overtures to her and promising her moral support at Geneva and financial help in return for certain concessions."³⁵ In September Simpson informed the Council of the League of Nations that his government's employment of financial and sanitary experts from Poland was a fulfillment of international expectations.³⁶ In reaction, Geneva withdrew its pressure, allowing Barclay a chance to implement his plan. The president's gambit exposed his regime to new dangers as the Polish favor turned into a serious caveat. For the moment, however, the alliance with Poland offered numerous advantages to Liberia, which Barclay's secretary Simpson outlined in his memoirs:

"The delegate who proved most friendly to us was Count Raczyński of Poland who had been most helpful to Liberia when the League of Nations was discussing our affairs. (...) In view of her long history and her size Poland aspired to the status of a great power; but she had arrived too late on the international scene to share in the scramble for colonies, and she was now trying to make up lost ground by expanding her sphere of political and commercial interest outside of Europe. This suited us well as, having been boycotted and politically isolated, we sought to grasp any hand of friendship that was extended to us; and Poland had a lot to offer not only in the way of political and diplomatic support but also in the way of trade and technical assistance."³⁷

Simpson's statement suggested that Barclay's administration might have been aware that Poland

³⁵ "Searchlight on Liberia," *The Daily Guardian*, July 26, 1934.

³⁶ Clarence Lorenzo Simpson, "La situation au Libéria. Lettre adressée par le Gouvernement du Libéria," September 27, 1934, 68CPCOM/7, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

³⁷ Clarence Lorenzo Simpson, *The Symbol of Liberia: Memoirs of C.L. Simpson* (Diplomatic Press and Publishing Company, 1961), 191.

entertained quasi-colonial aspirations but decided that the benefits of associating with Warsaw outweighed the costs. This turned out to be a risk worth taking for Monrovia.

The coming of Sajous to Poland was a serendipitous occurrence for the LMiK, too. By the time of his arrival, Orlicz-Dreszer and his intellectual fellow travelers at the Brühl Palace had drafted a program of activating trade with West Africa, locating capital in former German colonies and campaigning for colonial concessions and condominiums.³⁸ By late 1933, moreover, the LMiK's initial "colonial action" in Angola and strategy of offering Poland's services as a junior partner of Western colonialism had failed. Sajous's promise of Liberia's natural resources and national market generated the final impulse for the LMiK to dispatch Janusz Makarczyk and Jan Dmochowski to West Africa, where their official assignment was to sign preliminary trade agreements with local merchants in an attempt to eliminate foreign intermediaries from Poland's trade with the region.³⁹ Examined from hindsight, however, Makarczyk's mission to Monrovia had an ulterior motive and was clearly the most important point in the itinerary. In fact, little was reported about the Polish delegation's sojourn in Liberia's capital from a first-hand experience. According to Emanuelli, writing months later to the Quai d'Orsay, the Polish appearance was clad in an aura of mystery.⁴⁰ Sajous seems to have arrived in Monrovia in late March 1934 at the instigation of Louis Arthur Grimes, Liberia's chief justice.⁴¹ At the same time, a telegram was sent to Orlicz-Dreszer on March 22, informing the general that his delegation was anxiously anticipated

³⁸ "Sprawozdanie MSZ: działalność w sprawach kolonialnych i emigracyjnych (fragmenty)," December 20, 1933, doc. 372, PDD 1933.

³⁹ Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer and Wiesław Czermiński, "LMiK to the Interministerial Commission for the Support of Export," August 27, 1934, 2/504/5/60, Konsulat Generalny RP w Londynie, AAN.

⁴⁰ "Eugène Emanuelli to Louis Barthou."

⁴¹ "Telegram from Eugène Emanuelli to Quai d'Orsay," March 22, 1934, 68CPCOM/6, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

to arrive on April 15.⁴²

According to his 1936 public report from Liberia, Makarczyk (Figure 3) negotiated the terms of the treaty between the LMiK and Liberia in the presidential palace in Monrovia, where a banquet reception had been arranged for him and Dmochowski. Makarczyk was taken, allegedly



Figure 3. Janusz Makarczyk posing as a colonial pioneer in Liberia. Source: NAC 1-K-1621.

at the behest of the crowd outside, to the balcony of the palace to hear Poland's national anthem and to receive applause alongside Simpson, signing the agreement in Barclay's absence. He reported that most of the LMiK-Liberia treaty was not subject to any contestation from either side, but the Polish delegate was eager to persuade Simpson to allow the LMiK to establish a trading post in the rainforest.⁴³ Since interior commerce was otherwise forbidden to whites, what Makarczyk negotiated was actually the recognition of Poland as a nation friendly to Liberia.

He expressed his belief in a peaceful co-existence between

Africans and Polish settlers for mutual commercial benefits, claimed to appreciate Liberia's indigenous culture, did not dismiss the "Black Republic" as a parody of a state, and praised the first Afro-American colonists for their desire to become "free gentlemen of color." Makarczyk also excused instances of forced labor in the interior as customary practice and underlined the limited power of the government to control abuses.⁴⁴ Furthermore, during a tour of the Montserrado county, where the LMiK originally planned to establish plantations, the Polish delegate quoted one

⁴² "Louis Barthou to Jules Laroche," March 30, 1934, 68CPCOM/6, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

⁴³ Janusz Makarczyk, *Liberia, Liberyjczyk, Liberyjka* (Warsaw: Główna Księgarnia Wojskowa, 1936), 33–37.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 5–18.

Zukikandekey, Louis Arthur Grimes's brother-in-law and the chief of a Gola village called Ba: "Guest from distant Poland, I know that your country is wealthy and strong, but your country has been enslaved as well and knows what that word [slavery] means." Zukikandekey agreed to Polish settlers "living and enriching themselves on our soil because we know that they will not hurt us."⁴⁵

Makarczyk's marketing of "distant Poland" as Liberia's innocuous trade partner from Europe, which Monrovia encouraged for strategic reasons, signaled a shift away from the colonial milieu's posturing as a junior partner of Western empires. This new self-image was perfectly captured in the *IKC*, as a journalist Edward Ligocki reminisced about an old university friend of his, a senator from French Guadalupe named Achille René-Boisneuf, saying that Poland's "resurrection" after the partitions was a major topic of the Pan-Africanist Congress in Paris, since it made Africans hopeful for their own liberation. According to Ligocki, René-Boisneuf said with enthusiasm: "The blacks are expecting to find in Poland a distant but powerful guardian with a voice in the League of Nations and one that was always ready to defend the oppressed."⁴⁶ Ligocki also reported that Sajous had recently come to see him and recalled meeting Piłsudski at the Belvedere Palace, where the Marshal allegedly said: "Insofar as our plans [in Liberia] are concerned, I warn all lovers of colonial brawls [*awantury*] that my support is limited only to the program of friendly expansion in the spirit of your project. In Poland, there is no room for any dreams of conquest."⁴⁷ Ligocki recognized that "in a path as tortuous as the colonial one self-contradictions can easily occur." He argued, albeit without offering any practical policies, that Poland was equipped to propose a superior, moral solution to the "colonial problem," namely the creation of "friendly colonial protectorates" distinct from German exploitation and echoing

⁴⁵ Ibid., 82.

⁴⁶ Ligocki, "Czarne lądy a Polska (I)," 2.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 3.

Wilson's ideology with "its tendency to respect ideals."⁴⁸ But it was another journalist signed "A.Mir" who hit the nail on the head. By comparing the Polish delegate to Thomas Edward Lawrence, the British intelligence officer responsible for orchestrating the transformation of the Ottoman Empire's Middle Eastern provinces into Western mandates, A.Mir suggested that Makarczyk would employ similar methods of inciting anti-colonial uprisings to the benefit of his own empire.⁴⁹

The first manifestation of the rapprochement with Liberia was the coming of two Polish experts to Monrovia to assume the positions of economic and sanitary advisors over the course of the summer. The first one of them was Tadeusz Brudziński (1902–1960), a son of a famous Warsaw physician, a lieutenant engineer in the Polish Army, and a graduate of the world's leading programs in agriculture and law.⁵⁰ The second was Jerzy Wincenty Babecki (1890–1980), a colonel physician in the Polish Army with previous civil experience of treating venereal diseases among the Polish diaspora in France.⁵¹ Barclay hoped that his Polish appointees would improve Liberia's finances and sanitation, which would in turn persuade the League of Nations of the soundness of his own "plan of assistance." In consequence, in a letter sent to Geneva on September 27, 1934, Simpson praised Brudziński's education at Cornell University and Babecki's experience of working for the League of Nations.⁵² Barclay's government also signaled the establishment of friendly relations with Poland as a sign that Liberia was a trustworthy member of the international community. In July 1934, for example, chief justice Grimes informed Emily Greene Balch of the

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ A. Mir., "Legenda o 'polskim Lawrence,'" *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, January 4, 1937, 3–4.

⁵⁰ "Tadeusz Brudziński," n.d., I.481.B.12841, Kolekcja Akt Personalnych, CAW WBH.

⁵¹ "Jerzy Wincenty Babecki," n.d., I.481.B.12841, Kolekcja Akt Personalnych, CAW WBH; "Sprawozdanie dra J. Babeckiego o chorobach wenerycznych i warunkach sanit. wśród emigrantów polskich we Francji," December 21, 1926, 2/15/102, Ministerstwo Opieki Społecznej, AAN.

⁵² Simpson, "La situation au Libéria. Lettre adressée par le Gouvernement du Libéria."

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom that Makarczyk and Dmochowski, an "unbiased foreign population," had toured the hinterland in April and "expressed great surprise at what they had seen, and a determination not to give any credence whatever to any derogatory accounts of the native populations."⁵³

The "Liberian Action Plan": Toward Promethean Colonialism

The ball was now in the Polish court. While arranging for Brudziński and Babecki's summertime departure, Orlicz-Dreszer looked to acquire more specific privileges in Liberia than those outlined in the LMiK-Liberia treaty, taking advantage of the fact that Barclay was still trying to secure a loan from Poland. Léo Sajous turned into a mercurial intermediary once again, frequently moving across the Atlantic to ensure the LMiK's commitment to engage resources in the "Black Republic." In one report, a copy of which came into British possession in late August, Sajous, having taken another trip to Warsaw, informed Barclay that Orlicz-Dreszer had accepted the terms of the LMiK-Liberia treaty and had authorized Brudziński and Babecki to set out for Monrovia. The Haitian doctor conveyed, moreover, that Józef Beck's deputy had told him that Poland "would view with a certain amount of dislike its experts collaborating with experts under the jurisdiction of countries possessing colonies."⁵⁴ In any case, Sajous communicated to Barclay that Warsaw consented to the LMiK's projected establishment of a financial institution in Liberia and subsequent investment in the country's roads, bridges, and rivers. He stated that the Poles agreed to receiving 60% of the profits that they would generate from mining minerals in the "Black Republic."⁵⁵

⁵³ "Louis Arthur Grimes to Emily Greene Balch," July 23, 1934, FO 371/18042, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

⁵⁴ "Léo Sajous to Edwin Barclay," August 1934, 1, FO 371/18042, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

Sajous seemed to act with Barclay's full authorization. After dropping off Brudziński in Monrovia on August 20,⁵⁶ the Haitian doctor continued to Paris to negotiate with the LMiK's new envoy, Mieczysław Fularski (1896–1969), a traveler and major in the Polish Army.⁵⁷ During a conference that took place at the Polish embassy on August 30, Sajous mediated between Fularski and the Liberian delegation consisting of Simpson and another representative, F.A.K. Russell. As a result, the next stage of Polish-Liberian cooperation was decided. In the diplomatic realm, Monrovia promised to replace its representative in Paris, Othon de Bogaerde, with Sajous and to listen to Polish instructions in Geneva.⁵⁸ The LMiK agreed to dispatch a ship to Monrovia in November, where it would discharge Polish goods in exchange for Liberian coffee, and to send a coffee-processing machine at a later point. Furthermore, the LMiK's participation in the installation of electric and telephone networks in Liberia was discussed. Finally, as Sajous had suggested to Barclay, Fularski and the Liberians agreed in principle that 60% of all profits from the Polish exploitation of Liberian mines would be accorded to the LMiK.⁵⁹ Reaching an understanding in Paris, Simpson and Russell wished to translate it into a formal agreement and asked for an invitation to Warsaw. Alfred Chłapowski advised the Brühl Palace to promptly extend such an invitation to avoid hurting the Liberians' personal pride.⁶⁰

Before Simpson and Russell came to Warsaw to sign an additional agreement, however, the LMiK submitted a strictly confidential "Liberian action plan" to the Brühl Palace, which was

⁵⁶ "A.E. Yapp to John Simon," August 6, 1934, FO 371/18042, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

⁵⁷ "Mieczysław Fularski," n.d., AP 1358, Kolekcja Akt Personalnych, CAW WBH.

⁵⁸ Mieczysław Fularski, "Notatka dla Pana Ministra Mühlsteina z Konferencji Majora Dypl. Fularskiego Delegata Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej z Delegatami Rządu Liberyjskiego," August 31, 1934, 2/463/123, Ambasada RP w Paryżu, AAN.

⁵⁹ "Proces-Verbal de la Conférence qui eut lieu à Paris," August 30, 1934, 2/463/123, Ambasada RP w Paryżu, AAN.

⁶⁰ "Alfred Chłapowski to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," August 28, 1934, 2/463/123, Ambasada RP w Paryżu, AAN.

dated September 14, 1934 and featured the signature of Teodor Cybulski, one of the founders of the ZPK now working for the foreign ministry. According to the plan, Kamil Giżycki, Stanisław Szablowski, and Tadeusz Brudziński's brother, Zygmunt, had just arrived in Monrovia in mid-September to identify appropriate areas for their future plantations, where another two planters,

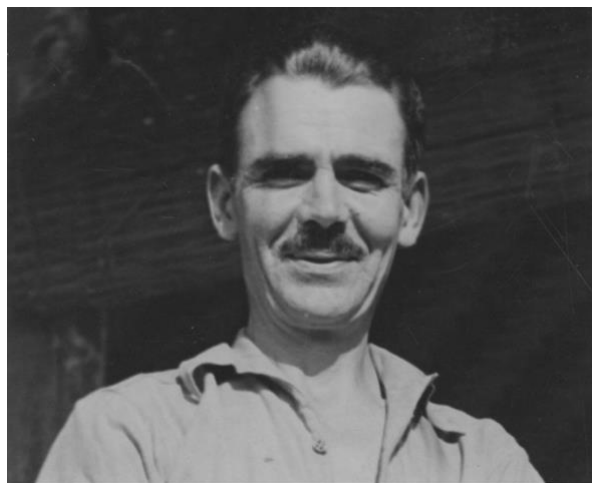


Figure 4. Kamil Giżycki smiling to the camera in Liberia. Giżycki was the commander of the secret intelligence cell called "Kadra" commissioned to sabotage the Americo-Liberian rule. Source: NAC 1-K-1488.

Kazimierz Armin and Lesław Kopytyński, would join them after an agricultural internship with Szablowski's brother in French Guinea in November 1934.⁶¹ All the five planters had formed a secret military intelligence unit codenamed "Kadra," operating under Orlicz-Dreszer's supervision, and had sworn to keep it secret or suffer the death penalty. Kamil Giżycki (1893–

1968) (Figure 4) was named the unit's leader based on his experience as "a reserve lieutenant of the Polish Army, captain of the Chinese army under Zhang Zuolin, being a mechanical engineer, and his familiarity of African plantation conditions from French Guinea."⁶² Indeed, during the series of civil wars in Russia, Giżycki had fought for Admiral Kolchak in Siberia and ran an explosives factory for Baron Roman von Ungern-Sternberg.⁶³ Subsequently, in the mid-1920s Giżycki accompanied Ferdynand Ossendowski, a fellow veteran of the Russian wars and the other Polish confidante of the "Bloody Baron,"⁶⁴ during his tour of the French colonies in Africa.⁶⁵

In anticipation of Simpson and Russell's upcoming delegation to Warsaw, the next stage

⁶¹ Teodor Cybulski, "Plan akcji liberyjskiej," September 14, 1934, 1, A.11.49/3, MSZ, PISM.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Witold Michałowski, "Kawaler Złotego Krzyża," in *Teki Sarmatów* (Pruszków: Rewasz, 2009), 111–31.

⁶⁴ Witold Michałowski, "Ferdynand Antoni Ossendowski," in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 24 (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 1979), 381–85.

⁶⁵ Ferdynand Antoni Ossendowski, *Wśród Czarnych* (Lwów: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1927), 5.

of Poland's expansion in Liberia was supposed to feature the signing of an additional secret protocol to the LMiK-Liberia agreement from April. The LMiK would receive the right to conduct river trade and territorial claims to certain areas where aerial bases could be established. In addition, Liberia would be encouraged to purchase Polish firearms, which would turn the "Black Republic" into Poland's debtor.⁶⁶ Tadeusz Brudziński was then supposed to secure the inclusion of Liberia's financial debt to Poland in the country's budget and to persuade the Firestone Rubber & Tire Company to cede its own financial claims in Liberia to the LMiK. In exchange, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce would grant Firestone the right to a tariff-free export of tires to Poland. In this way, it was hoped, the Polish institution would become Liberia's only creditor able to manipulate the country's finances through Brudziński. Liberia was to be taken over economically, and only nominal political authority was to be left to President Barclay.⁶⁷ The LMiK was to negotiate the extent to which the Ministry of Industry and Commerce would finance the execution of the plan and to assess the attitude of the Brühl Palace while maintaining that the action was its own initiative, for which Poland was not officially responsible.

Furthermore, the "Liberian action plan" envisioned the possibility of the foreign ministry, faced with Monrovia's opposition, having to deny its support of the LMiK. Under such circumstances, the LMiK would continue acting through the "Kadra." Giżycki was charged with a mission to befriend Prince Massaquoi ("Masakoj") and to support his pretenses to the throne of Liberia.⁶⁸ This was most likely a reference to Momolu Massaquoi (1869–1938), Liberia's consul to Germany in the years 1922–1930 and a prince of the Vai tribe.⁶⁹ Makarczyk had made contact

⁶⁶ Cybulski, "Plan akcji liberyjskiej," 2.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁹ Raymond J. Smyke, *The First African Diplomat: Momolu Massaquoi (1870-1938)* (Xlibris, 2004).

with Massaquoi in April 1934, with the prince welcoming the Polish envoy to a show of indigenous “wizardry” in Monrovia.⁷⁰ Now, Giżycki was to help Massaquoi stage an uprising of the Kru. Orlicz-Dreszer would coordinate such a revolt personally, with the Polish consul in Monrovia officially condemning the revolt. The LMiK was keeping the Polish government officially detached from the undertaking; Giżycki was the only member of the “Kadra” acquainted with this military option, and Brudziński and Babecki had been told not to come into any contact with Massaquoi.⁷¹

In summary, the authors of the secret plan identified the LMiK’s three major objectives. The first was “seizing total [economic] power in Liberia while maintaining the formal sovereignty of that country” while the second was “acquiring a source of raw materials for [our] military and private industries and an outpost for the dissemination of our goods to the markets of West Africa.” The third objective, put forward in anticipation of another world war, was “acquiring a base for a potential pirate action from which enemy ships could be attacked to cut their supply of African raw materials, as well as selling firearms to Liberia.”⁷² It is not clear to what exact extent the Brühl Palace initially approved of the plan, given its author’s statement that “it is necessary to obtain a precise opinion from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (...) In no case should we create the impression that Poland’s government has any interest [in the affair] but have its internal acceptance.”⁷³ The foreign minister Józef Beck, however, at least acquiesced to the LMiK’s project.

Simpson, Russell, and Sajous finally came to Warsaw on September 29, 1934, where they

⁷⁰ Makarczyk, *Liberia, Liberyjczyk, Liberyjka*, 55–57.

⁷¹ Cybulski, “Plan akcji liberyjskiej,” 4.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 4–5.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

spent two days meeting with Polish officials, which included a banquet featuring Beck and Piłsudski himself.⁷⁴ In his colorful recollections written in 1961, Simpson did not, however, mention any of the secret negotiations that took place behind the scenes during his delegation's sojourn in the Polish capital. In fact, in Warsaw the Liberian diplomats signed an additional, highly classified protocol to the original agreement with the LMiK from April, as well as a contract to purchase firearms from Poland's arms industry syndicate SEPEWE. The protocol allowed the LMiK to regulate Liberia's debt with Firestone, to build airports in certain areas, to carry out river trade, and to build depots for duty-free goods.⁷⁵ Moreover, "in addition to the written agreements, the delegates of the LMiK and representatives of Liberia discussed and specified matters that could not be written down," namely the creation of a battalion consisting of Africans (*murzyni*) under the supervision of five Polish officers, as well as the establishment of an investment bank with the starting capital of 100,000 zł (~\$20,000).⁷⁶ As for the purchase of firearms, SEPEWE sold Liberia weapons for 458,075 zł (~\$86,400), with the "Black Republic" immediately paying a security deposit of 50,000 zł (~\$9,400) and agreeing to regulate the remaining balance in installments.⁷⁷ Finally, the Liberians confirmed that a Polish-Liberian partnership for the exploitation of gold mines would be established, from which the LMiK would draw 60% of the profits.⁷⁸

The Polish government was tacitly encouraging the LMiK to engage in Liberia. (Figure 5) Meetings between the LMiK's and Liberia's representatives would take place in the Brühl Palace's official spaces, often in the presence of Polish government officials. Beyond the acceptance of the foreign ministry, the mission found support in the Polish Army thanks to the influence of the

⁷⁴ Simpson, *The Symbol of Liberia*, 194–95.

⁷⁵ Cybulski, "Notatka dla Pana Ministra w sprawie Liberii," 3–4.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

LMiK's uniformed chairman. In fact, Orlicz-Dreszer was receiving reports concerning Sajous not only in his capacity as the LMiK's chairman but also as inspector of the army.⁷⁹ Fularski, Brudziński, and Babecki all served as ranking officers in the army.⁸⁰ Moreover, the Brühl Palace instituted an honorary consulate in Monrovia on November 16, 1934, which was accredited under



Figure 5. The LMiK cooperated with the Polish government: Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer (middle) gifting president Ignacy Mościcki (left) ivory tusks from Liberia. Source: NAC 1-A-1341.

the consulate in Marseille.⁸¹ Its first director, Rudolf Rathaus (1900–1968), was an economist and career diplomat.⁸² At the same time, Rathaus was corresponding with both his superiors at the Brühl Palace and with the “dear

general.” It is unclear, however, to what extent the consul was implicated in the “Liberian action plan.” In March 1935, Rathaus was surprised to report that Sajous was disseminating “most unlikely gossip and conjunctions,” according to which the Polish diaspora in the United States and some African-Americans established a special fund to purchase Liberia’s debt from Firestone in exchange for the “Black Republic” becoming a Polish protectorate.⁸³ At the same time Barclay,

⁷⁹ “Dziennik referenta pism tajnych i poufnych Orlicz-Dreszera za rok 1934. Punkt 50. Odpis raportu w sprawie dr Sajous,” February 1934, I.302.4.2184, Generalny Inspektorat Sił Zbrojnych, CAW WBH.

⁸⁰ “Jerzy Wincenty Babecki”; “Tadeusz Brudziński”; “Mieczysław Fularski.”

⁸¹ *Rocznik służby zagranicznej według stanu na 1 VI 1939 r.* (Warsaw: Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, 1939), 86.

⁸² Leon Błaszczak T., “Rudolf Rathaus,” in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 30 (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 1987), 637–38.

⁸³ “Rudolf Rathaus to the Emigration Division,” March 27, 1935, 15, 2/322/4462, MSZ, AAN.

while possibly ignorant of the strings attached, was aware that Sajous was lobbying the Poles to purchase his country's debt. In the report from August 1934, Sajous informed Liberia's president that Poland would make "overtures to Firestone for a rubber market, an introduction to the request for the redemption of the debt by Liberia."⁸⁴ Furthermore, Barclay endorsed the doctor's appointment as Liberia's honorary consul in Poznań.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, Orlicz-Dreszer incentivized Sajous financially. By September 1937, the LMiK paid the Haitian more than 3,500 zł (~\$660) and lent 3,000 zł (~\$566) to Barclay's government.⁸⁶ In all, the Polish mission to Liberia became a joint effort of the LMiK, the Brühl Palace, and the military intelligence.

"We Discarded the Lumber for the Poles": The Polish-American Competition

Because of its function of containing the influence of the United States, the Polish mission to Liberia became subject to American attacks, with the Polish experts delegated to Monrovia standing in the first line of fire. Having arrived alongside Sajous in August 1934, Tadeusz Brudziński became Warsaw's first agent capable of supplying detailed information concerning the great game over Liberia. At the end of December 1934, Brudziński informed the Brühl Palace that "the political situation is starting to complicate itself so much that it is difficult to figure out what is a result of moves from the governing party's opposition fraction as opposed to pre-election politics or an international intrigue."⁸⁷ Monrovia's economic advisor underlined that "the entire 'white' world was immensely interested in our whole action, innocuously from the outside but clearly detrimentally and effectively in Liberia."⁸⁸ Moreover, Brudziński did not have great news

⁸⁴ "Léo Sajous to Edwin Barclay," 2.

⁸⁵ "Konsul czarnej republiki," *Kurier Poznański*, April 30, 1935, 1.

⁸⁶ "Zestawienie wydatków na akcję liberyjską po dzień 30.IX.1937," October 1937, I.302.4.2196, Generalny Inspektorat Sił Zbrojnych, CAW WBH.

⁸⁷ Tadeusz Brudziński, "Notatka doradcy rządu Liberii ds. ekonomicznych o polskiej aktywności w tym kraju," December 27, 1934, 807, doc. 346, PDD 1934.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

to convey about his negotiations with Firestone regarding Liberia's financial obligations. Apparently, the matter of transferring the loans to the LMiK was not discussed. Instead, Brudziński pointed out that Firestone knew about his role in coaching Barclay's responses to the tycoon's demands as well as his opposition to new tariffs that would benefit the U.S. concern.⁸⁹ Ironically, the Polish advisor's only option for the time being was to play his role effectively. He explained to the Brühl Palace his inability to adopt "a stance other than one compatible with justice and with the rights and interests of Liberia and its government."⁹⁰

Brudziński's complicated position was a function of a shift occurring in Liberia's relationship with the United States, which, in the words of an official from the Department of State, "did not formally break off relations with Liberia" but "merely failed to recognize the Barclay regime when King was ousted in 1930."⁹¹ In December 1934 Poland's ambassador in Washington, Stanisław Patek, predicted that, under Franklin D. Roosevelt's more conciliatory administration, Washington would soon extend recognition to Barclay's government: Harry A. McBride's delegation to Monrovia was probably the first step in the process.⁹² In fact, soon after arriving in Monrovia to assume the position of honorary consul, Rudolf Rathaus discovered Poland's advantages in Liberia diminished to the benefit of the United States. Quickly, the consul caught hold of a memorandum that Monrovia communicated to McBride. Using its newly established relations with Warsaw as a scarecrow to Washington and London, Barclay's officials stated in the memorandum that Liberia "concluded a commercial accord with Poland that will hopefully open

⁸⁹ Ibid., 808.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ "Note of the Division of Western European Affairs of the Department of State," April 11, 1935, RG 59 882/01, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

⁹² "Stanisław Patek to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," December 4, 1934, 2/490/10, Ambasada RP w Waszyngtonie, AAN.

the markets of central Europe to our products” as an alternative to the “exorbitant” British tariffs.⁹³ Immediately, aware of the rapidly changing situation, in January of the following year Orlicz-Dreszer informed Sajous in Paris, now accredited as Liberia’s consul general in Poland, that foreign intrigues had resulted in a cooling of Polish-Liberian relations and asked him to intervene to allow the LMiK to send yet more experts to the “Black Republic.”⁹⁴ The Haitian’s hands might have been tied, however, since Barclay seemed more interested in mending bonds with the United States.

In February 1935 Rathaus reported to Orlicz-Dreszer that Liberia’s rapprochement with Washington sent a signal to London to adopt a similarly reconciliatory attitude. Moreover, the détente was pleasing to the French, Warsaw’s only natural ally in Monrovia, leaving Poland only with potential enemies in Liberia.⁹⁵ Rathaus suggested that, thanks to their “great political talent,” the Liberians took account of their newly found leverage: “Since they could not use our assistance [in Geneva] when it was of great value to them, now, after the mood has changed, they are less eager to grant specific privileges.”⁹⁶ In this manner, the Polish consul expressed doubts about his ability to negotiate for any special advantages, perhaps unaware that such advantages had already been granted to the LMiK. His diagnosis of the situation was essentially correct, however. In his first lengthy report to the Brühl Palace from March 27, Rathaus guessed that Barclay’s cold attitude toward him suggested that Monrovia wished to limit the LMiK’s action to economics only. He assumed that Barclay viewed Liberia’s political connection to the LMiK as awkward after the threat from Geneva had disappeared.⁹⁷ Betraying his ignorance of the secret protocol, Rathaus also

⁹³ “Memorandum communiqué à M. McBride,” 1935, 6, 2/322/4462, MSZ, AAN.

⁹⁴ “Orlicz-Dreszer to Léo Sajous,” January 24, 1935, 2/322/4462, MSZ, AAN.

⁹⁵ “Rudolf Rathaus to Orlicz-Dreszer,” February 4, 1935, 1, 2/322/4462, MSZ, AAN.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ “Rudolf Rathaus to the Emigration Division,” 6–7.

suggested that Sajous's "gossip" concerning the LMiK's intention to purchase Liberia's debt, which he considered outlandish, prompted Washington to dispatch McBride to Monrovia to help regulate Firestone's claims. Meanwhile, other European powers likewise hurried to make arrangements with Barclay. In this manner, Rathaus communicated that Warsaw had inadvertently caused everyone to carry out a great favor for Liberia.⁹⁸

In addition to signals that Washington was ready for a rapprochement, Monrovia's maintaining safe distance from Warsaw was also likely related to the rising tensions between Italy and Ethiopia, the only other independent state in Africa, and to the subsequent Western attempts at colonial appeasement of Nazi Germany. In a letter to the Emigration Division from May, Rathaus made reference to the remarks of Barry Hertzog for *The New York Times*, in which the Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa suggested that Liberia could become a German mandate in exchange for the surrender of German claims to its former colonies in Africa.⁹⁹ In the same month, moreover, Józef Piłsudski passed away in Warsaw, an occurrence that became a barometer of foreign attitudes toward Poland's role in Liberia. Noticing little mourning among foreigners, Rathaus threatened Barclay's government with his immediate departure lest Piłsudski's death be commemorated in the same fashion in which Germany's Paul von Hindenburg's earlier passing had been. In effect, Barclay's entire cabinet attended a religious service celebrated in Piłsudski's honor.¹⁰⁰ According to the consul, Piłsudski's death resulted in genuine German sympathy for the loss of a fellow anti-Bolshevik leader, a cool British and French attitude, and an ambiguous American disposition.¹⁰¹ By August, Rathaus noted that threatening Monrovia in a

⁹⁸ Ibid., 15–20.

⁹⁹ "Rudolf Rathaus to Józef Potocki," May 24, 1935, 3, 2/322/4462, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁰⁰ "Rudolf Rathaus to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," August 11, 1935, 1, 2/322/4462, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 2–3.

similar manner would carry a much greater risk of failure since the rapprochement between Liberia and the United States was now complete, ironically with the help of Tadeusz Brudziński.¹⁰²

In his initial reports from Monrovia, Rathaus offered interesting assessments of his countryman officially working for Barclay as an economic advisor. In a letter to Orlicz-Dreszer, the consul called Brudziński's course of action "insufficiently driven by ideas" but described the economic advisor's position as strong "in white and black circles alike."¹⁰³ He communicated to Zarychta that Brudziński and Babecki "indulged so much in their mission in Liberia that, while defending Liberian interests, they seemed to forget the Polish cause."¹⁰⁴ It is not clear whether the Polish delegate was justified in his accusation, especially given his apparent ignorance of the "Liberian action plan," in which Brudziński's name featured so prominently. Rathaus reported to the ambassador in London, Edward Raczyński, however, that, "fortunately, to this day nobody understands for what we strive and what we want."¹⁰⁵ Indeed, the Western powers did not quite know the scope of Warsaw's plans. In November 1934 the British representative Yapp wrote sarcastically that Brudziński and Babecki drove "second-hand" automobiles and received meager salaries.¹⁰⁶ By May of the following year Yapp communicated "a clever joke about the introduction of Polish advisers" told on the "water front" in between shipments of logs: "We discarded the lumber for the Poles," with the word "lumber" referring to American fiscal officers, all big men.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Ibid., 1.

¹⁰³ "Rudolf Rathaus to Orlicz-Dreszer," 2–3.

¹⁰⁴ "Rudolf Rathaus to the Emigration Division," 3.

¹⁰⁵ "Rudolf Rathaus to Edward Raczyński," April 15, 1935, 2, 2/503/893, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

¹⁰⁶ "A.E. Yapp to G.H. Thompson," November 12, 1934, 3–4, FO 371/18043, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁰⁷ A.E. Yapp, "Foreign Relations," May 20, 1935, FO 458/123, Consulate and Legation, Liberia, General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

No actual discarding of American experts took place but, as the French delegate Emanuelli informed the Quai d'Orsay, Brudziński was the only European negotiating a new agreement concerning the refinancing of Liberia's obligations to Firestone.¹⁰⁸ (Figure 6) Otherwise an



Figure 6. Tadeusz Brudziński (third left), Edwin Barclay (middle), and U.S. fiscal officers. Brudziński had to navigate between Liberians and Americans to secure Poland's interests. Source: Janusz Lewandowski, "Z Republiki Liberyjskiej," *Morze*, no. 4 (1936).

opportunity for the LMiK to reach an agreement with the corporation, the series of negotiations featured Brudziński playing the role of Liberia's loyal economic advisor. According to Yapp, for example, the Pole's suggestion of tying Liberia's debts to the gold standard instead of the pound sterling removed the danger of Monrovia overpaying Firestone if the currency in question gained value.¹⁰⁹ In late August, another British delegate sent along a copy of an article from *The Weekly Mirror* that had allegedly drawn inspiration from the "Gold Standard theories of the Polish Adviser."¹¹⁰ Ironically, while supporting Brudziński's claim that Liberia's use of the British currency made its finances inflexible, the article hardly flattered the economic advisor's homeland,

¹⁰⁸ "Chargé d'Affaires of France in Liberia to Pierre Laval," April 15, 1935, 378PO/C/515, Londres, Série C, ADN.

¹⁰⁹ "A.E. Yapp to John Simon," June 1, 1935, FO 458/123, Consulate and Legation, Liberia, General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹¹⁰ "J.W. Whittall to I.J.T.M. Pink," August 23, 1935, 2-3, FO 371/19234, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

comparing Liberia to the Free City of Gdańsk (Danzig), which was forced to adopt the Polish złoty.¹¹¹ In any case, following Brudziński's successful mediation and signing of the agreement with Firestone, the United States officially recognized Barclay's government on June 11, 1935.¹¹² Warsaw likely believed that maintaining Liberia's economic sovereignty was preferable to allowing it to turn into another power's semi-colony. In consequence, after inaugurating a new era in Monrovia's relations with Washington, Brudziński labored to increase the former's budget revenues. In October, in an attempt to improve indigenous farming and forestry methods, the economic advisor set out to tour the neighboring colonies, looking to transplant European solutions to Liberia.¹¹³

Barclay's attitude toward Brudziński slowly changed under pressure from the United States. In his address to the legislature delivered on January 4, 1936, the Liberian president mentioned Brudziński's efforts to address the unfavorable export-import ratio.¹¹⁴ In the following month, Barclay sent his economic advisor a letter: "I am pleased to be in a position to place on record that absolute loyalty, sincerity and disinterested devotion to duty have been characteristic of your conduct here."¹¹⁵ By April 1936, Brudziński was scheduled to meet with Liberia's finance minister, Gabriel Dennis, in London to mint new coinage for Liberia that would secure an additional \$100,000 in revenue.¹¹⁶ Brudziński's sojourn in London was just a layover, however, for his contract was ending and it was initially not clear that it would be renewed. In September

¹¹¹ "Our Monetary Policy or Lack of Policy," *The Weekly Mirror*, August 9, 1935, 1–2.

¹¹² Frederick P. Hibbard, "Formal recognition of the American Government to the Liberian Government," June 13, 1935, RG 59 882/01, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

¹¹³ "A.E. Yapp to the Foreign Office," October 9, 1935, FO 458/123, Consulate and Legation, Liberia, General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹¹⁴ Edwin Barclay, "Presidential Message to the Legislature," January 4, 1936, 4–5, FO 371/20213, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹¹⁵ "Edwin Barclay to Tadeusz Brudziński," February 1, 1936, 2/322/4463, MSZ, AAN.

¹¹⁶ "Chargé d'Affaires of France in Liberia to Pierre Laval," April 14, 1936, 378PO/C/515, Londres, Série C, ADN.

1936, the French chargé d'affaires informed that Brudziński was returning to Monrovia with U.S. influence rising and Poland now perceived as the only European power capable of threatening the “Black Republic.” Emanuelli suggested that Liberia’s president was not prolonging Brudziński’s contract with a light heart but was left with little choice, given the terms of the treaty with the LMiK.¹¹⁷

Barclay’s anxiety was not entirely unreasonable, since the Brühl Palace had not lost its interest in taking advantage of Brudziński’s position. In the summer of 1936, the economic advisor discussed his further activity in Liberia with five officials: Tadeusz Gwiazdoski, Władysław Kulski, Apoloniusz Zarychta, and Józef Potocki. Brudziński reported that Monrovia’s financial situation was still unenviable and predicted that a part of its territory might need to be sold to finance its debt of \$3,500,000.¹¹⁸ The assembled diplomats did not, however, criticize his efforts to improve Liberia’s finances. Instead, Brudziński was only instructed to change his approach toward local whites, “especially representatives of the Anglo-Saxon countries.” The Brühl Palace desired the “advisors of the Polish nationality” to have “the highest reputation possible” and not to be “accused of politics that could be considered dangerous from the perspective of the leading colonial states.”¹¹⁹ In fact, in a later part of this dissertation, we will see that the foreign ministry, which became concerned with finding multilateral internationalist “solutions” to what it constructed as the Colonial Question, started to take control of the LMiK and its potentially-alienating Promethean animus after Orlicz-Dreszer’s death in July 1936.

In line with the Brühl Palace’s instructions, Brudziński returned to Monrovia at the end of

¹¹⁷ “Eugène Emanuelli to Pierre Laval,” September 2, 1936, 68CPCOM/7, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

¹¹⁸ “Niepodpisana notatka z narady u naczelnika Wydziału Zachodniego w sprawie polskiego osadnictwa w Liberii i stosunków handlowych z Afryką Zachodnią,” July 1936, 430, doc. 205, PDD 1936.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 431.

the summer. He continued pursuing ostensibly anti-American policies but soon found himself in hot water for his stance. By March 1937, during another trip home, the Polish advisor agreed to an interview with the LMiK's monthly *Morze* to talk about his role in the "Black Republic." He credited himself for introducing anti-dumping tariffs, facilitating food exports, lifting customs duties for industrial equipment, and preventing budgetary surplus to pay for officials' salary increases. These were all reflective of Monrovia's attempt to generate and export goods of its own as opposed to serving as an economic dumping ground. He pointed out that during his term, Liberia's annual budget increased from \$450,000 to \$600,000 in 1935.¹²⁰ Brudziński underlined, however, that it was necessary for Monrovia not only to pay off Firestone but also to encourage foreign investments, complaining that Barclay's agreement with the corporation left little room for allocating any money for other purposes.¹²¹ In an attempt to circumvent Firestone, the Pole created a special investment fund not included in Liberia's official budget, which was financed from fees levied against agricultural companies and compensated with lower real estate taxes.¹²²

Brudziński's statements sent ripples across the ocean and potentially ended his career in Liberia, with diplomat Prentiss B. Gilbert immediately informing the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, about the release of the interview.¹²³ In the margins of its English translation communicated to the Department of State, an American official wrote "not true" next to Brudziński's claim that Firestone limited Liberia's capacity to develop the country.¹²⁴ (According to Yapp, Liberia's newly

¹²⁰ Janusz Lewandowski, "Z Republiki Liberyjskiej," *Morze*, no. 4 (1936): 6.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ "Prentiss B. Gilbert to the Secretary of State," March 9, 1937, RG 59 882/01, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

¹²⁴ "Memorandum of conversation between Secretary Hull and the Polish ambassador, Count Potocki," January 19, 1937, 2, RG 59 882/01, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

found excess revenue was indeed applied to finance the loan.)¹²⁵ In consequence of an anti-Polish press campaign discussed later, Barclay would not renew Brudziński's contract, which expired in August 1937. As a sign of appreciation, however, the economic advisor received the Knight and Commander distinctions in the Liberian Humane Order of African Redemption in July.¹²⁶ Brudziński reciprocated with a tribute to Barclay, praising the president for achieving "excellent cordial relations with the outside world; internal peace; excellent finances; complete recovery." Referring to the Liberian emblem, Brudziński stated that "the hearts and souls of the natives are being opened to the ideals of the Lone Star."¹²⁷ Either personally unwilling or lacking sufficient opportunities, Tadeusz Brudziński was unable to achieve Warsaw's ambition of acquiring financial control over Liberia while, ironically, assisting Barclay's government in preserving a shadow of financial independence.

Beyond financial issues, the other area of Polish-American competition was in the realm of hygiene. In 1934, one of the ways in which the United States undermined Liberia's ability to govern itself was to attack its capability to introduce proper sanitary conditions in the interior.¹²⁸ Barclay's wish was therefore for the Polish sanitary expert, Jerzy Babecki, to "uplift" the country plagued with tropical diseases ranging from malaria to yaws to leprosy. Unlike Brudziński, whose personality and credentials did not suffer much scrutiny, Babecki's expertise was questioned. In a letter to Orlicz-Dreszer, Rathaus called him a "strange man": hard-working and good-natured but deprived of the "slightest ability to assess the situation and tactical skills."¹²⁹ Yapp, in turn, opined

¹²⁵ "A.E. Yapp to Samuel Hoare," November 11, 1935, FO 371/19234, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹²⁶ "Decorations," *The Liberia Official Gazette*, July 1937, 1.

¹²⁷ Tadeusz Brudziński, "Tribute to Edwin Barclay," August 5, 1937, FO 458/128, Consulate and Legation, Liberia, General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹²⁸ See, for example, Patton, "Liberia and Containment Policy Against Colonial Take-Over."

¹²⁹ "Rudolf Rathaus to Orlicz-Dreszer," 3.

that Babecki was an “energetic little man and intends well but has obviously undertaken a task for which he is not too well equipped.”¹³⁰ Most importantly, Babecki failed to reach a common understanding with Barclay’s other medical advisor of longer tenure, a Hungarian named R.G. Fuszek. According to the British, Fuszek’s negative disposition toward Babecki was likely a result of the former’s jealousy.¹³¹ At the same time, due to his lack of colonial experience, the Polish doctor refrained from examining Liberia’s interior and instead made unrealistic plans to reform hospitals in Monrovia.¹³² Moreover, combined with his non-existing diplomatic skills, Babecki’s suggestions that Liberia’s sanitary situation was hardly worse than those of the neighboring British and French colonies could have displeased Westerners looking to depict the “Black Republic” as a hothouse of diseases.¹³³

In early 1935 the Americans tried to take advantage of Babecki’s failures as Barclay’s government negotiated his replacement with the LMiK and the Brühl Palace. Władysław Osmolski – a colonel, physician, and health educator in the Polish Army – was initially invited to take his countryman’s place. Unfortunately, Osmolski fainted during a train ride along the way and passed away in a German hospital in the following month.¹³⁴ Warsaw’s failure to inform Rathaus about Osmolski’s death in a timely manner complicated the LMiK’s position since, unaware of his colleague’s passing, Babecki had already left Liberia, leaving an empty seat and allowing the Americans to lobby for their own expert to fill it.¹³⁵ Fortunately for the LMiK, Rathaus was able

¹³⁰ A.E. Yapp, “Revision of the annual report upon leading personalities in the Republic of Liberia,” February 20, 1935, 1, FO 371/19235, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹³¹ “J.W. Whittall to John Simon,” June 7, 1935, FO 371/19233, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹³² “A.E. Yapp to the British Secretary of Health,” January 24, 1936, FO 371/20214, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹³³ “Rudolf Rathaus to the Emigration Division,” 12.

¹³⁴ Teresa Ostrowska, “Władysław Leon Osmolski,” in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 24 (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 1979), 373–75.

¹³⁵ “Rudolf Rathaus to Józef Potocki,” August 11, 1935, 1–2, 2/322/4462, MSZ, AAN.

to persuade Barclay that Monrovia desired a person from a country that allegedly did not harbor colonial aspirations during a time of German colonial revisionism.¹³⁶ The specialist in question, Ludwik Anigstein (1891–1975), was a bacteriologist with a Ph.D. from the University of Heidelberg in Germany with previous experience studying clinical and epidemiological features of tropical diseases in British Malaya.¹³⁷ By June Liberia's government asked Anigstein to assume the position of its sanitary expert for eighteen months.¹³⁸ Still, at the beginning of August the LMik informed Rathaus that it was now considering a colonel named Waga for the position instead, forcing the consul to convey the unfortunate news of a further delay to the international community in Monrovia during a smallpox scare.¹³⁹ Thanks to an ultimate intervention from the Brühl Palace, Anigstein finally arrived in Liberia in September.¹⁴⁰ Nonetheless, the episode demonstrated that Americans stood ready to exploit any Polish weaknesses.

Anigstein was quite successful in managing to fend off any American objections despite publishing results that did not necessarily please them. By January 1936 Yapp reported to London that, unlike Babecki, the new Polish doctor was smoothly cooperating with Fuszek and surveying the conditions in the interior.¹⁴¹ It was also in that month that Anigstein released his *First Report on the Medical Survey of Liberia*, immediately printed in Monrovia and distributed to all interested

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ludwik Anigstein, "Curriculum Vitae," June 3, 1975, Biographical, Ludwik Anigstein Microbiology Papers (1932–1975), Truman G. Blocker, Jr. History of Medicine Collections, Moody Medical Library, University of Texas Medical Branch.

¹³⁸ G. Szulc, "State Institute of Hygiene to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," June 3, 1935, 2/322/4462, MSZ, AAN.

¹³⁹ "Rudolf Rathaus to Józef Potocki," August 11, 1935, 3; "Consulate in Monrovia to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," June 5, 1935, 2/322/4462, MSZ, AAN; "Hermans to Wilhelmstrasse," August 18, 1935, RAV Warschau 97, PAAA.

¹⁴⁰ *Sprawozdanie z działalności Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej 1.I.1935–1.I.1937* (Warsaw: Liga Morska i Kolonialna, 1937), 31.

¹⁴¹ "A.E. Yapp to the British Secretary of Health."

powers.¹⁴² According to the British delegate, Barclay's immediate release of the report showed his willingness to disclose Liberia's real sanitary conditions to the world.¹⁴³ In fact, Anigstein's study of malaria revealed a hyperendemic intensity, or percentage of affected children, as three times higher in the central province of the hinterland than what American scientists had measured during the Harvard Expedition of 1926–1927. The Polish expert believed that it was beyond doubt that malaria was a social disease stemming from economic factors.¹⁴⁴

Anigstein was successful in persuading Westerners that, with his help, Liberia could contain its health crisis. In this manner, the Polish doctor managed to contain American attempts to gain control of the country's health services, meeting both Barclay's and Orlicz-Dreszer's expectations. Anigstein would publish reports from two more medical surveys and remained in Liberia until the end of his term in the following year. In April 1936 Yapp informed Whitehall that Anigstein's return to Europe was related to his appendicitis and described the doctor in superlative terms as pleasant, honest, straightforward, and (according to Fuszek) highly qualified.¹⁴⁵ In the meantime, Anigstein was also in touch with the Brühl Palace, which received the Polish translation of his report from the first journey to the interior.¹⁴⁶ Warsaw cared about the report not only because of its suggestion that Americans had contributed to Liberia's malaria epidemic, but also because the area of Anigstein's study covered the Polish plantations.¹⁴⁷ It was, in fact, Orlicz-Dreszer's intelligence cell called "Kadra," operating under the leadership of Giżycki, that allowed the

¹⁴² Ludwik Anigstein, *First Report on the Medical Survey of Liberia (Central Province of the Hinterland)* (Monrovia: Government Printing Office, Department of State, 1936).

¹⁴³ "A.E. Yapp to the Foreign Office," January 24, 1936, FO 371/20214, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁴⁴ Anigstein, *First Report on the Medical Survey of Liberia (Central Province of the Hinterland)*.

¹⁴⁵ Yapp, "Revision of the annual report upon leading personalities in the Republic of Liberia," April 13, 1936, 1.

¹⁴⁶ "Sprawozdanie No. 1 z działalności Doradcy Lekarskiego Rządu Liberyjskiego D-ra Ludwika Anigsteina," December 1, 1935, 2, 2/322/4463, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁴⁷ Ludwik Anigstein, "Sunny Days among Black People: The Diary of an Expedition into the Liberian Jungle, 1935," *Texas Reports on Biology and Medicine* 30, no. 4 (1972): 258.

exhausted Anigstein to rest in their plantation house, where the Polish expert took a couple of days to recover.¹⁴⁸ While Brudziński and Anigstein worked to manipulate Liberia's policies to eliminate America's influence and create space for Poland's expansion, the LMiK made efforts to meet the economic stipulations of the agreement with Liberia, namely establishing a maximum of fifty plantations, installing a coffee-processing plant, exploiting local mining resources, carrying out river trade, and building depots for duty-free goods.

The Course and Decline of Poland's Commercial Expansion in Liberia

Whereas Brudziński and Anigstein worked to eliminate American influence from Liberia in order to allow Poland's financial and military expansion, the LMiK's *official* mission to the "Black Republic" was less Promethean. Instead, Liberia was one of the markets which the LMiK wished to open during its "colonial action" in West Africa in order to address the economic problem of Poland's trade remaining in the hands of Western intermediaries. It was the doomed "Elemka" that was originally supposed to be used for the "pioneering voyage" to West Africa, but, after the ship's debacle, the LMiK was forced to rent the coal steamer SS "Poznań" from the state subsidiary "Żegluga Polska." The "Poznań" left Gdynia on December 28, 1934, carrying a group of merchants and journalists, including Zygmunt Dreszer, one of the chairman's brothers, and Stefan Paprzycki, the LMiK's delegate.¹⁴⁹ The official purpose of the expedition was to deliver 2,000 tons of diverse goods, ranging from textiles and cement to enameled pots and canned food, to West Africa to assess which found the largest demand.¹⁵⁰ Monrovia was only one of the stops in an itinerary that also included Accra and Conakry. In February Rathaus reported that Africans

¹⁴⁸ Jan Hirschler, *Ze Lwowa do Liberii* (Lwów: Książnica Atlas, 1938), 123–24.

¹⁴⁹ Zygmunt Dreszer, *Pionierski rejs: dziennik podróży handlowej do portów Afryki Zachodniej* (Warsaw: Liga Morska i Kolonialna, 1936), 5–7.

¹⁵⁰ Michał Pankiewicz, "Nasza wyprawa do Afryki," *Morze*, no. 4 (1935): 6–7.

reacted positively to the arrival of the “Poznań” and described the quality, pricing, and packaging of products as generally good.”¹⁵¹

Notwithstanding these comments, the “Poznań” voyage suffered from insufficient logistical preparation and Western opposition. According to Rathaus, the unloading of cargo proceeded smoothly only thanks to the efforts of the LMiK’s delegate in Monrovia, Jan Bartoszczyk.¹⁵² Moreover, the Polish ship “apparently caused a true revolt among European companies,” which incurred heavy losses due to the special privileges granted to Polish products. The appearance of the “Poznań” resulted in all sorts of retaliation, including a British legal accusation against Captain Leon Rusiecki for illegally spending a night in Takoradi, Gold Coast.¹⁵³ The British shipping company Elder Dempster played dirty, too, sending out a telegram claiming the “Poznań” was a pirate ship.¹⁵⁴ Yapp himself explicitly told Rathaus that Britain’s attitude toward Poland’s economic activities would be contingent upon what English companies, in particular shipping lines, would be offered in return.¹⁵⁵

There was a good reason behind the Western frenzy. In March 1935, the German chargé d’affaires Hermans informed the German foreign ministry that a store had opened along one of the city’s major thoroughfares, in which the Poles engaged in small trade, mainly in textiles and finished dresses. Hermans noted, furthermore, that a load of cement from Poland had been sold to Barclay’s government without taxation, for which the Poles only vouched with a small security deposit. He reported that many foreign companies and governments worried about these special

¹⁵¹ “Rudolf Rathaus to Orlicz-Dreszer,” 1.

¹⁵² “Rudolf Rathaus to the Emigration Division,” 2.

¹⁵³ “Rudolf Rathaus to Edward Raczyński,” April 15, 1935, 2.

¹⁵⁴ “A.E. Yapp to Samuel Hoare,” September 27, 1935, FO 371/19234, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁵⁵ “Rudolf Rathaus to Edward Raczyński,” April 15, 1935, 4.

privileges granted to the Poles, whose settlement now counted about twenty men and women.¹⁵⁶ By July, Rathaus found himself reassuring his European colleagues that Poland's interests in Liberia did not clash with those of their countries. Yapp suggested, however, that British and French merchants had considered the advantages granted to the "Poznań" to be eating away their profits, since their own "head offices already buy in Poland such Polish goods as can be sold here."¹⁵⁷ At the same time, Rathaus was completing his tour of West Africa, which took him as far as Fernando Po and Cameroon. After his return to Monrovia in August, the Polish consul admitted to his German counterpart to have faced "difficulties upon difficulties" in activating trade with the region. Hermans reported to Berlin that Rathaus was highly believable given the contemporary period of economic hardship and Poland's lack of experience in Africa.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, the Polish contribution to Liberia's economic life was small and not all the goods from the "Poznań" had been sold.¹⁵⁹ Back in Warsaw, the Polish government acknowledged the LMiK's mistakes and suggested that Poland's merchant marine was not quite ready to carry out independent trade in the region.¹⁶⁰ Appreciating the "social character of the opposing party," the state subsidiary "Żegluga Polska" forgave the LMiK's losses resulting from the "pioneering voyage."¹⁶¹

The other reason for the failure of the LMiK's commercial expansion in Liberia was the precarious financial situation of the Polish honorary consulate in Monrovia. Immediately after landing in the Liberian capital, Rathaus complained about his material situation and identified

¹⁵⁶ "Hermans to Wilhelmstrasse," March 4, 1935, RAV Warschau 97, PAAA.

¹⁵⁷ "J.W. Whittal to John Simon," June 6, 1935, FO 371/19233, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁵⁸ "Hermans to Wilhelmstrasse," August 18, 1935.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁶⁰ "Tezy odnośnie możliwości w obszarze Zatoki Gwinejskiej," December 20, 1935, 2/322/4463, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁶¹ "Protokół posiedzenia Rady Nadzorczej S.A. Żegluga Polska w Gdyni," November 20, 1936, 11, 10/1033/6, Żegluga Polska S.A., APG; "Protokół posiedzenia Rady Nadzorczej Spółki Akcyjnej Żegluga Polska," April 24, 1937, 12, 10/1033/6, Żegluga Polska S.A., APG.

other European representations as much better adapted to their “colonial” function.¹⁶² Instead, the consul pointed out that setting up his office at a former hotel deprecated his reputation: every European diplomat required an office outside the city, where the rent was lower and real estate not in total disrepair, in addition to an automobile, cooling devices, and hygienic facilities. Rathaus was surprised at the high cost of maintenance but assured Edward Raczyński in London that any lesser arrangement would risk damaging Poland’s reputation.¹⁶³ Raczyński confirmed that his colleague was demanding a “necessary minimum without which one would not be able to work effectively in that exotic area.”¹⁶⁴ In fact, the consul’s lodging situation would soon prevent him from hosting an official reception to mourn Piłsudski, which the consul described as a true embarrassment: “Jazz music was playing from the consular office of the republic the day after the Marshal’s death since my [African] landlord decided to throw a dance party and all my interventions proved fruitless.”¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, the Brühl Palace’s stinginess, combined with Western intrigue, was leading to the need of replacing Rathaus with Stefan Paprzycki, simultaneously serving as the LMiK’s delegate.¹⁶⁶ By October, a number of Poles became indebted to a local German business that, according to the LMiK, purposely discredited their reputation in Monrovia.¹⁶⁷ In March 1936 Emanuelli reported that Rathaus was departing under rather dishonorable circumstances since Monrovia’s foreign banks had refused him credit and refrained from legal prosecution only thanks to an intervention from Barclay’s government.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶² “Rudolf Rathaus to Edward Raczyński,” January 26, 1935, 2/503/1312, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

¹⁶³ “Rudolf Rathaus to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” February 19, 1935, 2/503/1312, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

¹⁶⁴ “Edward Raczyński to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” February 19, 1935, 2/503/1312, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

¹⁶⁵ “Rudolf Rathaus to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” August 11, 1935, 4.

¹⁶⁶ *Sprawozdanie z działalności Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej 1.I.1935–1.I.1937*, 31.

¹⁶⁷ “Hermans to Wilhelmstrasse,” October 25, 1935, RAV Warschau 97, PAAA.

¹⁶⁸ “Eugène Emanuelli to Pierre Laval,” March 20, 1936, 68CPCOM/7, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

Another reason for the failure of the LMiK's economic expansion was insufficient caution. In April 1935, suspecting that Westerners opened his correspondence, Rathaus urged the Brühl Palace to sign a contract with Elder Dempster to guarantee an end to the procedure.¹⁶⁹ At the same time, the LMiK was not careful enough in communicating the details of the mission to the press. The Quai d'Orsay, for instance, learned about the content of the LMiK-Liberia not from any intelligence sources but from an article in the *IKC*.¹⁷⁰ In turn, scolding journalists for suggesting that Poland was all but annexing Liberia, Rathaus warned the foreign ministry that Western and Liberian agents monitored the Polish press.¹⁷¹ In fact, with the employment of Brudziński and Babecki feeding the propaganda of Poland's "capacity to direct life in Africa," many journalists simply could not refrain from covering the mission.¹⁷² Zygmunt Dreszer, in particular, echoed the contradictions of Promethean colonialism, writing that it was Poland's intention to support Liberia's independence and to compete commercially "to the benefit of black consumers."¹⁷³ Because of this journalistic enthusiasm, Rathaus was forced to preempt Barclay's inquiries into the articles, telling the president that neither the "Maritime League" nor the Polish government attached any importance to such voices.¹⁷⁴ He implored the foreign ministry to intervene with the LMiK to prevent the appearance of any additional articles.¹⁷⁵

The final reason for the failure of the LMiK's economic expansion was the secret role of the Polish planters, which distracted them from farming. Indeed, concealing as much as possible

¹⁶⁹ "Rudolf Rathaus to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," April 10, 1935, 2/503/1312, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

¹⁷⁰ "Jules Laroche to Pierre Laval," November 27, 1934, 68CPCOM/7, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

¹⁷¹ Rudolf Rathaus, "Raport konsula honorowego w Monrowii w związku z publikacjami prasy polskiej na temat Liberii," April 12, 1935, 303, doc. 130, PDD 1935.

¹⁷² Kazimierz Jeziorański, "Kolonie mandatowe a Polska," *Sprawy Morskie i Kolonialne*, no. 2 (1935): 35.

¹⁷³ Zygmunt Dreszer, "Jesteśmy w stolicy Côte d'Ivoire," *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, March 14, 1935, 3.

¹⁷⁴ Rathaus, "Raport konsula honorowego w Monrowii w związku z publikacjami prasy polskiej na temat Liberii," 303.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 304.

about Poland's dealings in Liberia was necessary not only to inhibit Western machinations but also to protect the confidentiality of the "Liberian action plan," in particular its military-political option. In this respect, too, the LMiK did not manifest overt caution. As early as in December 1934, the British embassy in Warsaw reported that a colonial activist had recently given a talk in Kraków. He claimed that Poland secured a "unique concession" in the "Black Republic" and made reference to "the example of foreign colonial powers" that gained control of territories through planters.¹⁷⁶ It is likely that, given Brudziński's inability to orchestrate the sale of Liberia's debt to the LMiK, Orlicz-Dreszer's intelligence cell "Kadra" tested the possibility of inciting an indigenous revolt in the interior in conjunction with the Brühl Palace. Beck's ministry remained interested in the fate of the Kru, in particular. Józef Potocki underlined crucial passages in Rathaus's reports, in which the consul described London's initiatives to resolve the "problem" of the Kru with Monrovia to secure iron ore concessions from Barclay.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, according to Emanuelli, Barclay intended to send five students to Poland for military training in accordance with the LMiK-Liberia treaty.¹⁷⁸ It is therefore possible that Orlicz-Dreszer was forming the nucleus of a future Liberian battalion under Polish control. Simpson and Russell themselves had consented to the idea back in September 1934, but the general probably hoped that such troops could be ultimately turned against Barclay. Meanwhile, in the interior, the "Kadra" was charged with inciting an indigenous revolt in partnership with "prince Massaquoi" while it was also expected to generate economic profit.

The location of the Polish plantations was selected for reasons other than economic. By

¹⁷⁶ "William Erskine to John Simon," December 4, 1934, FO 371/18043, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁷⁷ "Rudolf Rathaus to Józef Potocki," June 8, 1935, 2/322/4462, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁷⁸ "Eugène Emanuelli to Pierre Laval," September 27, 1935, 68CPCOM/7, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

May 1937 the planters authored a document in which they admitted that Orlicz-Dreszer had sent them to Liberia for “special purposes” and suggested that developing plantations and establishing trading posts constituted secondary tasks.¹⁷⁹ In fact, the “Kadra” identified potential locations of the future farms for these “special purposes.” In October 1934, following Monrovia’s refusal to grant the planters a concession in a place called Cavalla, which was more suitable for farming, the “Kadra” selected the areas around the village of Reputa (most often spelled Wrepputown or Rapputown).¹⁸⁰ It was located about 150 km from Monrovia, along the road leading from the capital to French Guinea through Careysburg, Kakata, and Gbarnga.¹⁸¹ (Figure 7) In July 1938 Józef Mańkowski, Poland’s last consul in Monrovia, confirmed that “other reasons” (*inne względy*) had indeed contributed to the location of the plantations.¹⁸² He reported that the concession around Reputa stretched for 15 sq. km and was divided into three parts called “Batoli,” “Nini-Bolomo,” and “Dingita.” Another concession of 10 sq. km existed in a place called Maino but remained entirely uncultivated, and the planters rented an additional several square kilometers along the St. Paul River to the northeast.¹⁸³

It is not clear why Reputa was considered a good choice for the “special purposes.” In contrast, however, Konrad Chmielewski, a planter with previous experience in South America, offered reasons for its economic suitability. He described the area as “excellent, located at the roots of “Rappu Hill” (in the Bong Mountains) and facing the southeast, therefore protected from northern and western winds, which is highly important for plantations.” According to

¹⁷⁹ “Notatka w sprawie akcji L. M. i Kol. w Liberii,” May 28, 1937, 1, 2/470/2/5, Konsulat Honorowy RP w Monrowii, AAN.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Brudziński, “Notatka doradcy rządu Liberii ds. ekonomicznych o polskiej aktywności w tym kraju,” 808–9; Kopczyński, *Liberia. Zarys geograficzno-opisowy*, 129.

¹⁸² “Józef Mańkowski to the Consulate in Marseille,” July 27, 1938, 1, 2/322/4464, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

Chmielewski, “the soil was a good, widely distributed ‘terra rossa’ with a thick layer of humus” but “completely overgrown with forests of different ages, since the natives change the location of

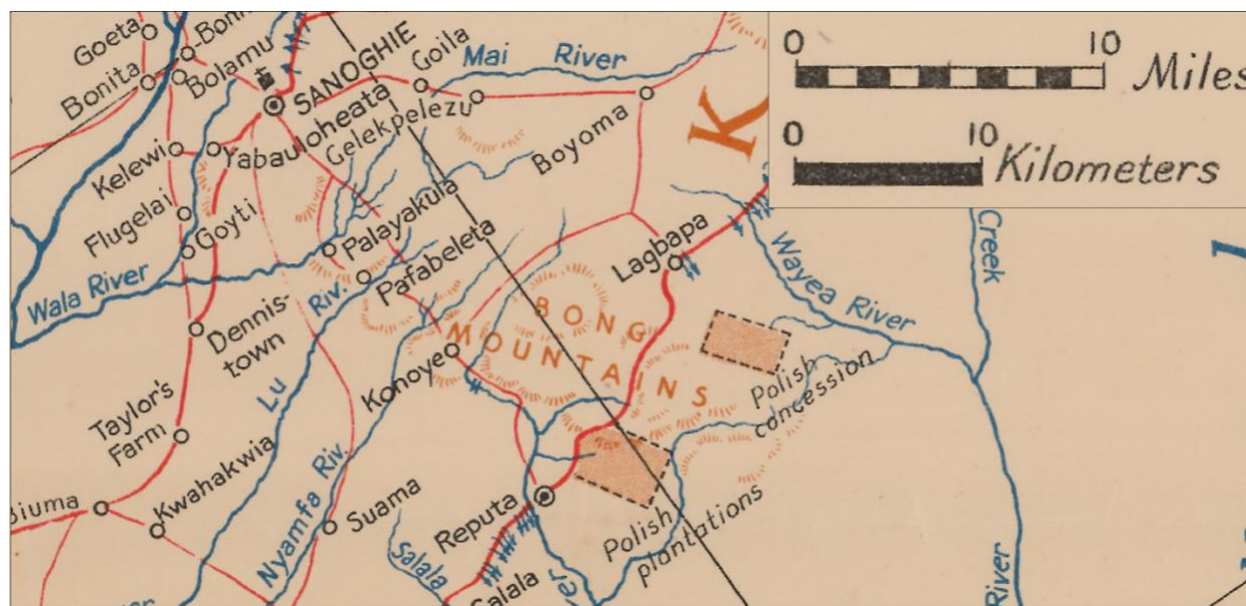


Figure 7. A snippet from a map of Liberia showing the location of the Polish plantations near Reputa and the additional Polish concession. Source: University of Wisconsin-Madison, Arthur R. Robinson Map Library, G88801938.H3. Copyright: Institute of Geographical Exploration, Harvard University.

cultivation every year and move somewhere else, and special types of wood and liana testify to the quality of the soil.”¹⁸⁴ By 1936, the planters argued, Monrovia was supposed to have transformed the dirt road leading to Reputa into a highway.¹⁸⁵ In July 1938 only about ten additional kilometers of the road had been constructed, and the rest of the way leading to Reputa remained merely a tract in the middle of a rainforest.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, this was only one of the Polish pioneers’ many logistical and economic difficulties. In December 1934, while helping the planters with formalities in Monrovia, Tadeusz Brudziński found Barclay’s officials dragging their feet.¹⁸⁷ In fact, since the paperwork and the construction of houses took until March of the following year, the “Kadra” missed the first dry season and did not start farming until much later.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Konrad Chmielewski, “Memorandum,” November 1935, 4–5, 2/322/4462, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁸⁵ “Notatka w sprawie akcji L. M. i Kol. w Liberii,” 1.

¹⁸⁶ “Józef Mańkowski to the Consulate in Marseille,” July 27, 1938, 1.

¹⁸⁷ Brudziński, “Notatka doradcy rządu Liberii ds. ekonomicznych o polskiej aktywności w tym kraju,” 808–9.

¹⁸⁸ “Notatka w sprawie akcji L. M. i Kol. w Liberii,” 1.

In the meantime, the planters also faced important financial decisions. Since the LMiK-Liberia agreement had not determined which side was financially responsible for geometrically surveying the concession. Giżycki was forced to pay a large part of a \$750 fee out of his own pocket.¹⁸⁹ While failing to iron out such financial details, the LMiK did credit each planter with 20,000 zł (~\$3,800). Nevertheless, the loan was reserved for farming purposes only. In anticipation of the “Poznań,” however, the “Kadra” decided that a speedy establishment of a trading syndicate was initially more important than planting.¹⁹⁰ In consequence, each of the planters contributed a fourth of his loan as starting capital for the business, but the LMiK never reimbursed them for this expense, arguing that investment funding for the syndicate would come from elsewhere.¹⁹¹ In effect, despite an auspicious start following the arrival of the Polish ship, the syndicate was forced to cease its trading in Monrovia and to close its shop in Reputa after only a couple of months.¹⁹²

The LMiK failed to deliver other economic promises made in the agreement with Liberia, too. In 1934 Makarczyk had identified navigable sections of the Little Cape Mount River (Loffa River) in Montserrado county as a potential location for a trading post from which coffee could be collected from the surrounding areas, processed, and transported to the coast. He was against concentrating all the plantations in one area and recommended the LMiK to spread its agents across Liberia.¹⁹³ By May 1937, however, the “Kadra” admitted in a statement written for the Polish government that Warsaw did not fulfill its promise to install a coffee-processing factory and to launch river trade, which destroyed its trustworthiness and made its position in Liberia precarious.¹⁹⁴ Chmielewski argued from hindsight that it was a mistake to charge the planters with

¹⁸⁹ Brudziński, “Notatka doradcy rządu Liberii ds. ekonomicznych o polskiej aktywności w tym kraju,” 808–9.

¹⁹⁰ Chmielewski, “Memorandum,” 2–3.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁹² “Notatka w sprawie akcji L. M. i Kol. w Liberii,” 3.

¹⁹³ Makarczyk, *Liberia, Liberyjczyk, Liberyjka*, 80–81, 88.

¹⁹⁴ “Notatka w sprawie akcji L. M. i Kol. w Liberii,” 3.

the task of running both the syndicate and plantations while supplying funding only for the latter. He pointed out that it was only a matter of time before one of these activities became neglected.¹⁹⁵

Indeed, as the “Kadra” channeled its energy into trading, their farms did not turn out to be highly profitable. In the first place, the delays meant that farming could only start in the latter half of 1935. To pay for their sustenance, the planters decided to cultivate less expensive castor plants and tobacco instead of growing a large number of coffee and cacao (or perhaps cocoa).¹⁹⁶ Chmielewski pointed out that to survive in the “one of the worst climates in the world” required high monthly living allowances.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, in 1936 locus destroyed the castor plants, while a number of coffee and cacao plants actually planted withered due to an insufficient number of cover crops shading them.¹⁹⁸ In mid-1937, the LMiK sent Stanisław Podoski to inspect the unproductive concession.¹⁹⁹ In consequence, a French agricultural engineer named L. Castelli was commissioned to assess the plantations. He proposed methods of further development that would lead to a mass-scale production of coffee and cacao and warrant the installation of a coffee-processing plant, but only as late as in 1942.²⁰⁰ After Castelli’s survey, the “Kadra” replanted coffee, cacao, and kola but once again lost many trees, this time due to poor-quality seeds.²⁰¹ In response, the Polish planters engineered their own seeds and produced somewhat better results in 1938.²⁰² While predicting a real improvement only in 1939, the Polish consul blamed the difficult climate and

¹⁹⁵ Chmielewski, “Memorandum,” 9–10.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6–7.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8–9.

¹⁹⁸ “Józef Mańkowski to the Consulate in Marseille,” July 27, 1938, 2; “Notatka w sprawie akcji L. M. i Kol. w Liberii,” 1–2.

¹⁹⁹ “Biuletyn tygodniowy nr 25/37 Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej,” July 1, 1937, 5, 2/322/2494, MSZ, AAN.

²⁰⁰ L. Castelli, “Rapport sur les possessions et les plantations de la Ligue Maritime et Coloniale Polonaise dans le secteur de Rapputown,” May 1937, 2/470/2/5, Konsulat Honorowy RP w Monrowii, AAN.

²⁰¹ “Józef Mańkowski to the Consulate in Marseille,” July 27, 1938, 2; “Notatka w sprawie akcji L. M. i Kol. w Liberii,” 1–2.

²⁰² “Notatka w sprawie akcji L. M. i Kol. w Liberii,” 2.

constant rotation of agricultural interns from Poland for the persisting difficulties.²⁰³

A Caribbean Interlude: The Polish Expedition to Haiti

While the LMiK made little economic progress in Liberia as a result of tactical mistakes, Western competition, and preoccupation with political-military affairs, Orlicz-Dreszer attempted Promethean colonialism in another “black republic.” The last objective of the “Liberian action plan” from September 1934 mentioned that, while Liberia could be used as Poland’s maritime headquarters during a global conflict, “orders (*obstalunki*) will come from the republic of Haiti.”²⁰⁴ Sajous, with his Haitian origins, was the lynchpin connecting Liberia and the Caribbean nation in the Promethean scheme: Anatol Mühlstein from the embassy in Paris informed Warsaw that Sajous was envisioning a bright future for Poland’s economic expansion not only in Liberia but also in Haiti.²⁰⁵ By the summer of the following year Orlicz-Dreszer dispatched Stefan Iwanowski (1890–1954), the LMiK’s chief in the Lublin province and a colonel in the Polish Army, with a mission to the island of Hispaniola. In July, three additional delegates named Knobelsdorf, Chciwski, and Raczyński joined him in New York, from where the four traveled to Haiti to prepare the ground for the arrival of a ship from Gdynia. As in Liberia, the Polish delegation would negotiate for settlement concessions, duty privileges, and a right to exploit minerals.²⁰⁶ Likewise, Warsaw considered it inadvisable to embrace the mission officially and claimed to support its commercial aims only.²⁰⁷ By August, however, Iwanowski assumed the title of a representative of a “Polish Commercial Mission” and signed a draft of a commercial treaty with Haiti’s foreign minister. He

²⁰³ “Józef Mańkowski to the Consulate in Marseille,” July 27, 1938, 2.

²⁰⁴ Cybulski, “Plan akcji liberyjskiej,” 5.

²⁰⁵ “Anatol Mühlstein to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” September 12, 1934, 2/463/123, Ambasada RP w Paryżu, AAN.

²⁰⁶ Teodor Cybulski, “Notatka w sprawie akcji Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej w Ameryce Środkowej,” July 5, 1935, 2/322/9577, MSZ, AAN.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

informed Orlicz-Dreszer to have purposely eschewed consulting either the Brühl Palace or the embassy in Washington about the draft of the treaty “for special reasons,” apparently in accordance with the general’s instructions.²⁰⁸

The LMiK’s “special reasons” in Haiti mirrored its motives in Liberia: helping the country fight off Western internationalist colonialism while advancing Poland’s interests. According to Iwanowski, Haiti could not lower itself to signing a trade treaty with the LMiK in lieu of the Polish government, since “this is not Liberia but a politically developed country with large ambitions.”²⁰⁹ Noting Haiti’s *de facto* status as a protectorate of the United States and the American control of its finances, Iwanowski underlined that a more suitable moment for colonial expansion would not come.²¹⁰ He pointed out that settlement in Haiti was not possible due to the density of the local population and the Caribbean republic’s own colonial ambitions: “One cannot take any territorial concessions into account in Haiti since they would like colonies themselves.”²¹¹ Polish colonial expansion was therefore supposed to be purely commercial. Iwanowski’s agreement with the Caribbean nation assured Poland the status of greatest economic privilege and essentially acknowledged that Haiti would purchase a greater value of goods from Poland than it would sell back. In return, the colonel allegedly persuaded the Haitians that they could take advantage of Gdynia’s status of a trade hub to distribute Haitian coffee to all of eastern Europe instead of having to ship it through Hamburg.²¹² In turn, Sajous assured Orlicz-Dreszer that president Sténio Vincent (1875–1959) believed that Haiti could export as much as 5,000 tons of coffee to Poland in the

²⁰⁸ “Stefan Iwanowski to Orlicz-Dreszer,” August 3, 1935, 1, 2/322/3367, MSZ, AAN.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹⁰ “Stefan Iwanowski to Orlicz-Dreszer.”

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

²¹² “Stefan Iwanowski to Orlicz-Dreszer.”

following year.²¹³

Notwithstanding the Haitian promises, the Brühl Palace adopted a rather critical attitude toward the LMiK's mission across the Atlantic. In the fall of 1935, the foreign ministry blasted Iwanowski for his alleged amateurishness and usurpation of its prerogatives. In particular, the Brühl Palace challenged Orlicz-Dreszer over authority, implying that the LMiK could not act behind the government's back to present it with *faits accomplis*.²¹⁴ Moreover, in contrast to Iwanowski, Polish officials did not believe that Haiti's status as a practical protectorate of the United States made it an appropriate area for colonial expansion. They noted that, quite to the contrary, American fiscal officers stopped Haiti's government from granting Poland special privileges.²¹⁵ In effect, the LMiK's cavalier and insubordinate actions in Haiti combined with its economic failures in Liberia to persuade the Brühl Palace that Promethean colonialism was a rather unrealistic approach to colonial expansion.

“Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing”: The Backlash Against Poland

The ultimate end of the Polish mission to Liberia resulted not from economic failures but from the exposure of the LMiK's clandestine objectives in the “Black Republic.” It is not clear what served as the impulse for that exposure, but it might have been related to Orlicz-Dreszer's tragic death in a plane crash in July 1936. In response to the chairman's passing, Sajous approached the Polish embassy in Paris at the end of the month to express his dissatisfaction with the Polish economic performance in Liberia and asked to exclude the LMiK from any future Polish engagement.²¹⁶ At the end of August, however, Zarychta told Sajous that Warsaw would continue

²¹³ “Léo Sajous to Orlicz-Dreszer,” September 11, 1935, 2/322/3367, MSZ, AAN.

²¹⁴ “Orlicz-Dreszer to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” January 20, 1936, 2/322/3367, MSZ, AAN.

²¹⁵ “Zygmunt Merdinger to Józef Beck,” December 28, 1935, 2/322/3367, MSZ, AAN.

²¹⁶ Franciszek Frankowski, “Embassy in Paris to the Emigration Division,” July 31, 1936, 2/322/4463, MSZ, AAN.

to act in Liberia through the LMiK, since it believed that expanding regular commercial relations was the optimal course of action.²¹⁷ While the Brühl Palace had already decided not to pursue Promethean colonialism in Haiti, its continued use of the LMiK in Liberia was probably interpreted in Monrovia as Warsaw's unwillingness to fix the economic failures.

In the late summer and early fall of 1936, an anti-Polish campaign was launched in African and U.S. newspapers to suggest that Poland was aiming to annex Liberia. On August 28, Monrovia's semi-official *Weekly Mirror* reprinted an article titled "Poland Wants Liberia" from the *African Morning Post* published in Accra, Gold Coast. The author was the future president of independent Nigeria, Nnamdi Azikiwe, then a radical journalist. Azikiwe described an elaborate plan to infiltrate Liberia on the part of a country that had been a "former servant of Queen Maria Theresa of Austria, Queen Catherine II of Russia, and Frederick the Great of Prussia." According to Azikiwe, foreign minister Józef Beck endeared himself to the Liberian delegates in Geneva, pretending to advise them "how to get out of the octopus grip of the League of Nations' Plan of Assistance." In turn, the Pan-African activist called the Polish advisors "wolves in sheep's clothing" and identified the existence of a secret Polish-German agreement, whereby Poland would cede the "Polish Corridor" to Nazi Germany in exchange for a free hand in Liberia. Azikiwe extorted the "world of greed" and "thankless humanity," hoping that "President Edwin Barclay was intelligent enough to realize the part certain foreign experts play in his country."²¹⁸

Allegations of a secret Polish-German understanding had appeared in French newspapers in different forms as early as 1934, with journalists suggesting that Poland's non-aggression and trade treaties with Germany contained secret clauses. In consequence, the Polish government was

²¹⁷ "Notatka z rozmowy p. Naczelnika Zarychty z p. Sajous, Konsulem Haiti i Liberii," August 29, 1936, 2/322/4463, MSZ, AAN.

²¹⁸ Nnamdi Azikiwe, "Poland Wants Liberia," *The Weekly Mirror*, August 28, 1936, 1.

issuing relevant démenti as late as 1936.²¹⁹ Azikiwe was partly right, however, and it was certainly for this reason that his article caused strong reactions from the Polish side. Stefan Paprzycki sent Simpson a protest note concerning the article on August 31.²²⁰ He received a response on the following day, in which Simpson's deputy falsely claimed that his government could not control *The Weekly Mirror*.²²¹ At the same time, Brudziński himself prepared a letter to Azikiwe, protesting the "abuse of the freedom of the press," pointing out historical inconsistencies in the article, and underlining the absolute indispensability of Gdynia to the Polish state. The economic advisor asked: "What's the use of an African Colony to a nation depriving itself first of its access to the seas and its harbors?"²²² After consulting with Barclay, however, Brudziński decided not to send his letter.²²³ In the following issue dated September 4, *The Weekly Mirror* published an apology for reprinting Azikiwe's article, addressed to "our Polish friends," in which the editorial staff regretted offending the Polish government. The weekly admitted that Poland's "independence without the corridor would be a mere farce" and that to forego the investment in Gdynia "for a less certain and more expensive venture in colonies" would bring a revolution to Poland similar to Spain's [referring to the Spanish Civil War].²²⁴

Despite the apology, the damage to the LMiK's Promethean colonialism had been done. Paprzycki reported that Azikiwe's article was distributed throughout the coast of French Guinea in 8,000 copies and that it "moved entire Liberia."²²⁵ Still, Warsaw was not looking to grant the matter any more publicity: only the right-wing *ABC-Nowiny Codzienne* continued to write about

²¹⁹ Wiktor Skiwski, "Pismo naczelnika Wydziału Prasowego do konsulatu generalnego w Berlinie w sprawie rzekomego tajnego porozumienia polsko-niemieckiego," April 24, 1936, 251–54, doc. 121, PDD 1936.

²²⁰ "Stefan Paprzycki to Clarence Lorenzo Simpson," August 31, 1936, 2/322/4463, MSZ, AAN.

²²¹ "Arthur Barclay to Stefan Paprzycki," September 1, 1936, 2/322/4463, MSZ, AAN.

²²² "Tadeusz Brudziński to Nnamdi Azikiwe," August 31, 1936, 2/322/4463, MSZ, AAN.

²²³ "Stefan Paprzycki to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," September 5, 1936, 2/322/4463, MSZ, AAN.

²²⁴ "Offending Our Friends," *The Weekly Mirror*, September 4, 1936, 1–2.

²²⁵ "Stefan Paprzycki to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

Liberia.²²⁶ As the anti-Polish press campaign continued, however, the Brühl Palace was forced to react. On October 2, 1936 *The Weekly Mirror* reprinted another anti-Polish article, entitled “Leakage of German-Polish Plan Originates in Warsaw,” this time originating from *The News Review* of London, inspired by a certain Doug Carmo Caranda. This new publication repeated Azikiwe’s claims concerning a Polish-German scheme but now added the possibility of the Reich compensating Poland for the loss of Gdynia with Memel (Klaipeda), a Lithuanian port city which the Germans wished to annex.²²⁷ In reaction to the article, Liberia’s consul in Paris, Othon de Bogaerde, came to the Polish embassy in Paris and communicated that it would be advisable for the LMiK to deny the claims as they disturbed Liberia’s public opinion.²²⁸ In turn, Beck’s secretary of state, Jan Szembek, instructed the embassy to say that Poland would revise its support for Liberia in Geneva if not assured proper compensation.²²⁹ Consequently, the embassy in Paris summoned Bogaerde to demand a stop to the press campaign and to threaten Polish retaliation.²³⁰ Irritated, the Liberian consul advised Simpson to respond with the analogous threat of cancelling the agreement with the LMiK.²³¹

It was not only Monrovia but also Washington that reacted to the rumors that an African-American newspaper, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, was helping disseminate.²³² As the U.S. influence

²²⁶ “Wara od Liberii! Zamach Trzeciej Rzeszy na polskie interesy kolonialne,” *ABC—Nowiny Codzienne*, September 22, 1936, 1.

²²⁷ “Leakage of German-Polish Plan Originates in Warsaw,” *The Weekly Mirror*, October 2, 1936, 1–2.

²²⁸ “Juliusz Łukasiewicz to Józef Beck,” October 13, 1936, 2/322/4463, MSZ, AAN.

²²⁹ “Jan Szembek to the Embassy in Paris,” October 29, 1936, 45004/18.1, Ambasada (France), HILA.

²³⁰ “Consulate in Marseille to Stefan Paprzycki,” November 18, 1936, 2/470/2/5, Konsulat Honorowy RP w Monrowii, AAN.

²³¹ “Othon de Bogaerde to Clarence Lorenzo Simpson,” November 6, 1937, 3, RG 59 882/01, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

²³² “Poland Aims to Grab Liberia,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, October 3, 1936; “Liberia Making Foreign Alliances,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, April 3, 1937; “Liberia May Be Gobbled Up by Poland’s Greed,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 17, 1937; “Polish Foreign Office Denies Liberia Grab,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, December 4, 1937; “Threats of German and Polish Aggression Dim Gayety of Liberia’s 90th Birthday,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, August 7, 1937.

in Liberia grew exponentially, Beck's intimations made in Geneva in the fall of 1936 about the possibility of the League of Nations creating a "new form of mandate with international financial support for development" caused suspicions that Poland might be targeting Liberia.²³³ At the beginning of November, the U.S. chargé d'affaires ad interim in Warsaw, Halleck L. Rose, asked Józef Potocki about the articles, to which the deputy director of the Western Section responded that Poland was not paying too much attention to what was likely an internal intrigue in Monrovia whereby certain members of Barclay's government wished to discredit Brudziński and Anigstein, but stated that his country still felt compelled to protest.²³⁴ Three weeks later, Barclay told the U.S. chargé d'affaires in Monrovia, Clifton R. Wharton, that his cabinet did not receive proper responses from the Polish government concerning the article from the *Times of London*. He therefore wished to express concern regarding his country's independence to the United States and declared to restrict Poland's influence stemming from the LMiK-Liberia agreement. Wharton communicated to the Department of State that Liberia had a solid ground to worry about Poland, but also pointed out that Barclay was pleased with Anigstein while remaining somewhat suspicious of Brudziński and trying not to renew his appointment.²³⁵ The U.S. chargé d'affaires was, moreover, not in a position to answer Barclay what Washington's position toward Poland's aggression against Liberia would be.²³⁶

It was perhaps Wharton's inability to reassure Barclay that was the reason for Monrovia's somewhat more apologetic message conveyed to Łukasiewicz on December 31, in which the

²³³ "Memorandum. Polish and German interests in Liberia," January 19, 1937, RG 59 882/01, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

²³⁴ "Rozmowa p. Wicedyrektora Potockiego z chargé d'affaires St. Zjednoczonych p. Rose," November 2, 1936, 2/322/4463, MSZ, AAN.

²³⁵ "Clifton R. Wharton to Cordell Hull," November 24, 1936, RG 59 882/01, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

²³⁶ "The Chargé in Liberia (Wharton) to the Secretary of State," November 26, 1936, doc. 496, Near East and Africa, FRUS 1936/III.

Liberian government, while still refusing to publish an official *démenti* in *The Weekly Mirror*, expressed its regret about the incident and hoped that another similar article would not appear in the Liberian press. The message also suggested that Poland and Liberia should continue cooperating in the League of Nations. Łukasiewicz accepted the statement but pointed out that an appropriate *démenti* from Monrovia would not interfere with Liberia's freedom of the press.²³⁷ At the same time, the Brühl Palace tested the Americans. In January 1937, Kulikowski, an official at Poland's embassy in Washington, approached an American named Cummings and expressed interest in Liberia. Kulikowski asked Cummings to offer his opinion regarding the possibility of a colonial settlement between Britain and Germany at Liberia's cost and inquired whether the United States would defend the "Black Republic" in case its sovereignty was threatened. Cummings responded that Liberia could feel threatened and that, certainly, the American public would react strongly to any attempts to take over Liberia.²³⁸ In March, the LMiK's Wiktor Podoski asked the U.S. charge d'affaires ad interim in Warsaw, Hallet Johnson, for a letter of introduction for his brother, Stanisław, about to travel to Liberia. At the same time, Podoski assured Johnson that Liberia could not be used as Poland's emigration outlet but only as a training ground for tropical farmers.²³⁹

Despite Warsaw's tacit assurances, Washington remained watchful. In January 1937, Secretary of State Cordell Hull told ambassador Józef Potocki about America's special connection to Liberia and negative reactions that any attack against the republic's sovereignty would spark among African-Americans.²⁴⁰ By November of the same year, the Polish counselor at the embassy

²³⁷ "Juliusz Łukasiewicz to Józef Beck," December 31, 1936, 2/322/4463, MSZ, AAN.

²³⁸ Cummings, "Memorandum," January 9, 1937, RG 59 760C.82, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

²³⁹ "Hallet Johnson to Cordell Hull," March 10, 1937, RG 59 882/01, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

²⁴⁰ "Memorandum of conversation between Secretary Hull and the Polish ambassador, Count Potocki."

in Washington, Witold Wańkiewicz, protested against more anti-Polish publications in *The Pittsburgh Courier*, arguing that such revelations reminded him of listening to a clairvoyant giving him “a most excellent idea which otherwise never would have entered his mind.”²⁴¹ Still, America’s delegation in Monrovia did not cease to worry. In December, Lester A. Walton sent an English translation of the LMiK-Liberia agreement to Washington, which stated that “the agreement was never ratified by the Liberian Legislature” and that “the Liberian Government maintains the instrument is not in force and not binding on either of the principles.”²⁴² Nonetheless, Walton drew Washington’s attention to the articles that granted the LMiK privileges usually accorded to a government: “the provisions of the agreement gave Poland an excellent opportunity to conduct an ambitious campaign of economic penetration in Liberia, and further made possible the bringing into the republic an appreciable number of Polish nationals.”²⁴³ Washington had assumed the role of protecting Monrovia from the nation that had once itself aspired to the function of Liberia’s protector.

According to Jan Koziński (Karski), by the end of 1937 the Americans found out about the arms trade between Poland and Liberia, fell into a fury, and threatened Warsaw with an official investigation in Geneva. Karski reminisced that “Beck commanded a retreat” and “we started packing our stuff in Liberia.”²⁴⁴ In July 1938, the Brühl Palace’s replacement of the LMiK-affiliated Stefan Paprzycki with the career diplomat Józef Mańkowski signaled a new approach to the new circumstances. Immediately after his arrival, Mańkowski assessed Poland’s trade potential

²⁴¹ “Memorandum of Conversation between the Counselor of the Polish Embassy, Mr. Witold Wankowicz, and Mr. Orsen N. Nielsen,” November 16, 1937, RG 59 882/01, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

²⁴² “Lester A. Walton to the Secretary of State,” October 27, 1937, 2, RG 59 760C.82, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁴⁴ Waldemar Piasecki, *Jan Karski, jedno życie: kompletna opowieść*, vol. I (1914-1939) Madagaskar (Kraków: Insignis, 2015), 660.

in the country, informing the State Export Institute that Liberia's market could not absorb but a couple of Polish products. In November, the new consul was attempting to persuade Warsaw to order the Polish yacht "Poleszuk," currently touring the coast of West Africa for propagandistic purposes, not to stop in Monrovia. Mańkowski argued that such a stop would only give fodder to the anti-Polish sentiment and trigger unnecessary associations with the British and American warships stationed at the port.²⁴⁵ At the same time, the consul lost his composure under pressure. According to Walton, Mańkowski remarked to his "house boy" (African housekeeper) that "Liberia should have no War Department or a Post Office Department" and that "Poland is going to mandate Liberia for the country is not doing anything." Monrovia, not wishing to betray the American source of the information, decided not to take action against the consul personally.²⁴⁶ At the same time, however, Barclay's men targeted the LMiK; according to a wartime letter from Mańkowski, at the instigation of the United States.²⁴⁷

Planning a Coup? The End of Promethean Colonialism in Liberia

By 1938, more concrete accusations against the Polish planters followed the more general attacks in the press, which caused the ultimate end of Promethean colonialism in the "Black Republic." In August 1938, Simpson complained to Mańkowski about planters failing to compensate indigenous workers for their labor. In addition, the secretary implied the LMiK's overall inability to meet the stipulations of the treaty, including the installation of a coffee-processing plant. In response, Mańkowski promised to ask the LMiK for intervention.²⁴⁸ Days

²⁴⁵ "Józef Mańkowski to the Consulate in Marseille," November 17, 1938, 2/322/4464, MSZ, AAN.

²⁴⁶ "Lester A. Walton to the Secretary of State," August 9, 1938, RG 59 760C.82, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

²⁴⁷ "Józef Mańkowski to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris," November 21, 1939, 2/464/2/25, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

²⁴⁸ "Józef Mańkowski to the Consulate in Marseille," August 12, 1938, 2/322/4464, MSZ, AAN.

later, however, he pointed out to the consulate in Marseille that Simpson's letter of accusation against the LMiK did not list any specific wrongs committed.²⁴⁹ Instead, Barclays's secretary of state only conveyed a message from the commissioner of the Kakata-Blarkon district, according to whom one of the Polish cacao plantations had originally belonged to the indigenous people, for which they had not been compensated.²⁵⁰ By September 1938, Warsaw delegated an agricultural expert named Michał Świrski to assess the actual situation around Reputa. In consequence, the LMiK decided that a reduction in the number of planters and plantations was necessary.²⁵¹ Orlicz-Dreszer's successor, Stanisław Kwaśniewski, drafted a statement addressed to Barclay, communicating the LMiK's intention to limit the scope of its economic activities and claiming that "the [environmental] sustainability of the concession area is not entirely satisfactory as far as the cultivation of those staples is concerned." In addition, Kwaśniewski accused Liberia's government of tolerating certain individuals "who have not hesitated to charge Poland with alleged territorial aspirations aimed against Liberia."²⁵²

Indeed, Simpson was not expressing his discontent to Mańkowski only for economic reasons. In January 1939, the Polish consul reported to his superiors in Marseille that "guns, hunting rifles, and other firearms of Polish origin had been sold and given out to indigenous people and Europeans." The occurrences had gained notoriety, "especially since there was once a quarrel between buyers and the case had to be settled in court."²⁵³ Two months later, the diplomat stated that a court case concerning the illegal sale of firearms was resumed against indigenous plantation

²⁴⁹ "Józef Mańkowski to the Consulate in Marseille," August 18, 1938, 2/322/4464, MSZ, AAN.

²⁵⁰ "Clarence Lorenzo Simpson to Józef Mańkowski," August 17, 1938, 2/322/4464, MSZ, AAN.

²⁵¹ "Józef Mańkowski to the Consulate in Marseille," November 3, 1938, 2/322/4464, MSZ, AAN; "No. KM.5/39 do Konsulatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Marsylii dot. akcji L. M. i Kol. w Liberii," January 17, 1939, 2/470/2/5, Konsulat Honorowy RP w Monrowii, AAN.

²⁵² "Projekt oświadczenia L.M. i K. złożonego Rządowi R.L.," November 25, 1938, 2/470/2/5, Konsulat Honorowy RP w Monrowii, AAN.

²⁵³ "No. KM.5/39 do Konsulatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w Marsylii dot. akcji L. M. i Kol. w Liberii."

workers arrested for possession and that the weapons had been confiscated. Monrovia's authorities eventually released the workers but claimed the right to prosecute unidentified Polish planters.²⁵⁴ It was to these court cases that Kwaśniewski referred in his statement to Barclay, writing about "regrettable incidents such as requisitions of personal luggage of the Polish planters."²⁵⁵ It is unclear whether the implication of the planters in the illegal sale of firearms was related to the coup envisioned years earlier in the "Liberian action plan." Interestingly, there was a local "Masakoj" indulged in sabotage around the same time. In 1937, Nathaniel Varney Massaquoi (1905–1962), a son of Liberia's consul in Germany, was accused of establishing a youth group to remove the Americo-Liberians from power and replace them with an indigenous government. In 1940, Massaquoi was sentenced for "plotting to kill President Edwin J. Barclay" and spent several years in prison.²⁵⁶

There are no indications that Kamil Giżycki attempted to establish contact with Massaquoi in accordance with the "Liberian action plan," but an important account of his dealings with Africans in Liberia comes from a Lwów zoologist named Jan Hirschler. In November 1935 Hirschler and his wife Zofia established a scientific station in Batoli, Giżycki and Szablowski's plantation, which included their living quarters, a dining house fitted with European accessories, and smaller houses for servants.²⁵⁷ While full of admiration for Giżycki's pioneering skills, Hirschler also described his interactions with indigenous tribes, in particular with King Vrepu of the Pesse tribe. (Figure 8) He remembered the leader of the "Kadra" commanding his unit to dress in white clothes, to sing carols, and to shoot salvoes during the Christmas season in order to

²⁵⁴ "Józef Mańkowski to the Consulate in Marseille," March 17, 1939, 2/322/4465, MSZ, AAN.

²⁵⁵ "Projekt oświadczenia L.M. i K. złożonego Rządowi R.L."

²⁵⁶ Dunn, Beyan, and Burrowes, *Historical Dictionary of Liberia*, 224; Raymond J. Smyke, "Nathaniel V. Massaquoi: A Biographical Essay," *Liberian Studies Journal* 17, no. 1 (1992): 46–65.

²⁵⁷ Hirschler, *Ze Lwowa do Liberii*, 146–51.

impress King Vrepu. Hirschler recalled that Giżycki's group maintained good relations with Africans, cooperating with them to fix the local infrastructure and bribing them with European goods.²⁵⁸ At the same time, however, Hirschler described the Kru only once and in a fleeting manner, calling them "shapely as if they had been chiseled out of mahogany" and "remarkably quick, entrepreneurial, and tried in combat with the maritime element."²⁵⁹

Likewise, in his postwar memoir written under communist censorship, Giżycki failed to



Figure 8. King Vrepu and his entourage. It was with indigenous leaders like these that Giżycki needed to negotiate for power. Source: Jan Hirschler, *Ze Lwowa do Liberii, Lwów, Książnica Atlas, 1938.*

mention not only any clandestine activities but anything interesting related to the Polish presence in Liberia; only the "Poznań" was discussed at some length.²⁶⁰ He did describe instances of successful cohabitation with the

surrounding tribes, however, including his constant financial negotiations with King Vrepu living in his village of "Wrepoo-town [Reputa] located four kilometers away from the plantations."²⁶¹ He denied any abuses of indigenous people, alleging that Vrepu set traps for workers from "Batoli" to lure them into sleeping with his wife in order to charge them appropriate fines afterwards. Giżycki suggested, therefore, that delaying paying his workers was sometimes necessary to stop

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 181–94.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 81.

²⁶⁰ Kamil Giżycki, *Węzowa góra. Opowieści z puszczy liberyjskiej* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1958), 261–63.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 224.

them from constantly philandering with the “queen.”²⁶² Furthermore, the erstwhile leader of the “Kadra” described accompanying a former employee of his to Monrovia and helping him obtain an official permit from the ministry of war to hunt with an old “museum” rifle.²⁶³ While it is impossible to determine whether Giżycki was distributing firearms to indigenous people with the ulterior motive of inciting an uprising, in July 1938 Mańkowski removed two confidential documents from the archive of the consulate in Monrovia, one from February 1936 and the other from the following October.²⁶⁴ Likely, the missing files were related to the court cases litigated against the Polish planter.

Notwithstanding whether they sold rifles in the interior or not, the troubled interactions of some Polish planters with Africans might have contributed to the failure of Promethean colonialism. Back in December 1934, one of the LMiK’s interns, Lesław Kopytyński, allegedly refused to dance with a “colored woman” aboard the Dutch steamer running between French Guinea to Liberia. Tadeusz Brudziński forwarded a letter addressed to Simpson from Kopytyński’s older companions, Chmielewski and Januszewicz, in which they wrote (in English): “We are extremely sorry that such an interpretation [accusation of racism] has been given to our behavior, when in fact we stopped to dance because of misbehavior of a certain group of white people after a rather heavy drinking party.”²⁶⁵ Fortunately for the accused, Simpson accepted the explanation and the matter was put to rest.²⁶⁶ Still, Brudziński noted that Kopytyński’s attitude toward Africans left much to be desired and strongly advised the LMiK to select colonists extremely carefully:

²⁶² Ibid., 225–41.

²⁶³ Ibid., 257–60.

²⁶⁴ Józef Mańkowski, “Note concerning the removal of confidential documents,” July 5, 1938, 2/470/2/5, Konsulat Honorowy RP w Monrowii, AAN.

²⁶⁵ “Konrad Chmielewski and Janusz Januszewicz to Clarence Lorenzo Simpson,” December 20, 1934, 2/322/4462, MSZ, AAN.

²⁶⁶ “Clarence Lorenzo Simpson to Tadeusz Brudziński,” December 26, 1934, 2/322/4462, MSZ, AAN.

“One more gossip of this sort will bury our good relations completely.”²⁶⁷ Moreover, in his journal entry from October 31, 1935, Ludwik Anigstein remarked that all white men in Africa “stubbornly adhered” to the idea of white supremacy while their behavior “gave the lie to the dogma,” demoralizing them and transforming them into “despots.” While full of respect for Giżycki and Januszewicz, Anigstein pointed out that Polish planters also suffered from this pattern, with “their very unpleasant way of dealing with the blacks.”²⁶⁸

By March 1939, as a result of the accusations that Polish planters planned a coup in Liberia, the LMiK planned to sell its plantations to another Polish institution so that they could be used as experimental sites for students from the Jagiellonian University.²⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the faculty of the university deemed Reputa badly suited for agricultural experimentation, given the depletion of its soil stemming from multiple clearings and exploitation.²⁷⁰ Moreover, by the end of the following month, the Brühl Palace decided that French West Africa was a more hospitable ground for Poland’s commercial expansion. In consequence, Mańkowski was moved to Dakar and the liquidation of the consulate in Monrovia was initiated. The last Polish planters, including the leader of the “Kadra,” left Liberia upon the outbreak of World War II.²⁷¹ By that time, the “colonial action” in Liberia had cost the LMiK more than 500,000 zł (~\$94,000).²⁷² The five-year-long Polish mission to Liberia had come to an end and, apart from supplying planters and interns with tropical experience, Poland’s engagement in Liberia did not provide it any tangible benefits, as a

²⁶⁷ Brudziński, “Notatka doradcy rządu Liberii ds. ekonomicznych o polskiej aktywności w tym kraju,” 810.

²⁶⁸ Anigstein, “Sunny Days among Black People,” 266.

²⁶⁹ “Notatka dla Protektora Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej, Pana Generała Broni Kazimierza Sosnkowskiego, w sprawie kosztów utrzymania plantacji doświadczalnej w Liberii,” March 22, 1939, I.302.4.2198, Generalny Inspektorat Sił Zbrojnych, CAW WBH.

²⁷⁰ “Jan Kiełpiński to Józef Zieliński,” March 20, 1939, 2/322/9753, MSZ, AAN.

²⁷¹ “Enclosure to Arthur G. Ponsonby’s despatch No. 6(88/S/40),” January 19, 1940, 2, FO 371/24645, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

²⁷² “Zestawienie wydatków na akcję liberyjską po dzień 30.IX.1937.”

combination of U.S. pressure, logistical difficulties, and preoccupation with clandestine activities rendered the LMiK unable to carry out the “Liberian action plan.”

Conclusion

Despite its dire end, the story of the Polish mission to Liberia is worth telling. In the first place, the initiative for the project came from some Liberian leaders who were interested in playing into Poland’s self-perception of an anti-imperial nation in order to preserve their own independence. In response, the LMiK adjusted its discourse from positioning Poland as a junior partner of Western empires in Africa to promoting a sort of an anti-imperial, or Promethean, colonialism. Orlicz-Dreszer’s plan to use the Polish economic advisor to Barclay’s government to take control of Liberia’s finances and/or to install an indigenous puppet regime was simultaneously self-serving and anti-colonial, since Monrovia’s elites ruled the country in a colonial fashion. Ironically, the LMiK and the Brühl Palace incidentally fulfilled their Promethean promises, with Polish interference helping Liberia escape the League of Nations and the United States’ investigation into slavery allegations.

Within a couple of years, official organs of the Polish state became disappointed with the economic performance and political difficulties of Promethean colonialism. By late 1936, the death of Orlicz-Dreszer signaled a shift of colonial initiative away from the LMiK and toward the Brühl Palace, the latter of which found Liberia and Haiti to be suboptimal spaces for its purposes, precisely because of their all but official status as U.S. protectorates. Moreover, before the Polish government could improve the LMiK’s enterprise, an American-inspired anti-Polish press campaign broke out, putting an effective end to any of its Promethean aspirations in Liberia. Soon, however, other factors persuaded the Brühl Palace to channel its energy into constructing Poland’s Colonial Question in the international forum rather than into “colonial actions.”

Chapter 5

Ethiopia, Jews, and the Return of Demographics

“Negus, our Negus, only you can save us.
Our lines in the south have been caught in a rout.
And to the north of Makale, all our tactics are folly.
Negus, our Negus, give me shot, give me powder.”¹

The Polish government granted its tacit support to the LMiK’s projects in Africa in the first half of the 1930s. Nevertheless, it was not until the second half of 1936 that Poland’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs under Józef Beck decided to announce the country’s interest in colonial expansion in the international forum. While the LMiK looked to pioneer Poland’s trade with West Africa and pursued Promethean colonialism, the Brühl Palace now approached the Colonial Question more systemically, as the Italian invasion of Ethiopia (Figure 1) created a space for renegotiating its nature in the League of Nations. At the same time, however, there was a widespread perception among Polish elites that an endemic demographic-economic problem supposedly related to Jews debilitated the country, which encouraged them to address the Colonial Question as one corresponding to both internal and external issues whose “solution” allegedly lay in Africa. This chapter examines the factors that converged to persuade Polish diplomats to tackle the Colonial Question not only in economic but also in demographic terms.

The Ethiopian Overtures and their Failure

In the 1920s there was an understanding in Poland that Ethiopia’s loss of independence would be to the detriment of all weaker states. In August 1926, Franciszek Sokal, the Polish delegate to the League of Nations, argued that Poland should protect the interests of small nations

¹ Mieczysław Miksne, *Abisynia* (Warsaw: Syrena-Record, 1936). Translation of the original Polish lyrics borrowed from Ryszard Kapuściński, *The Emperor: Downfall of an Autocrat* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983).

in the diplomatic arena. He wrote to Warsaw: “From our point of view, no matter whether it was about an attack against the territorial integrity of small Albania or an attack against the sovereignty of half-civilized Abyssinia carried through economic penetration, the role of the League of Nations should be the same: to guard scrupulously the execution of Article 10.”² In turn, Addis-Ababa



Figure 1. Map showing the location of Ethiopia in eastern Africa.
 Edited from: Hydrographic Office of the U.S. Navy (Public Domain).
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established contact with Warsaw only toward the end of the 1920s, inviting the Polish government to attend the coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie. At the head of the Polish delegation sent to the Ethiopian capital in the fall of 1930 was Juliusz Dzieduszycki, Poland's chargé d'affaires in Cairo.³ According to one account, accompanying Dzieduszycki was none other than Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer.⁴ During

Selassie's audition with the Polish envoy, the two sides exchanged official notes and decorations.⁵ Moreover, a series of preliminary negotiations concerning a “treaty of commerce and friendship” was conducted.⁶

In the early 1930s, Warsaw was likely too occupied with the consequences of the global market crash to respond to further Ethiopian overtures that took place at the time. In 1931, a

² Franciszek Sokal, “G/IL No. 1776/26. Apel Abisynii,” August 2, 1926, 2/513/225, Delegacja RP przy Lidze Narodów, AAN.

³ Antoni Jazdzewski, “Notatka radcy w Wydziale Wschodnim o stosunkach polsko-etiopskich,” May 15, 1935, 391, doc. 171, PDD 1935.

⁴ Jan Drohojowski, *Wspomnienia dyplomatyczne* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1972), 368–69.

⁵ “Belatenguéta Herouy to Juliusz Dzieduszycki,” December 5, 1930, A.50/109, Polish Legation in Cairo, PISM.

⁶ Haile Selassie, *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress, 1892-1937: The Autobiography of Emperor Haile Sellassie*, trans. Edward Ullendorff, vol. I (Oxford University Press, 1976), 173.

representative of Poland's State Armament Factories (*Państwowe Wytwórnice Uzbrojenia*) proposed an Ethiopian delegation a sale of 50,000–100,000 rifles.⁷ One year later, the Ethiopian consul to Paris and London, Bedironda Zelleke Aguedeou, came to Warsaw as a special envoy to President Ignacy Mościcki to exchange gifts and, most importantly, to lobby for Poland's official recognition of his country. (Figure 2) The Brühl Palace did not, however, establish official diplomatic relations with Addis-Ababa at the time.⁸ Warsaw did, however, maintain a



Figure 2. The Ethiopian delegation leaves Warsaw after lobbying for a tightening of Polish-Ethiopian relations (1932). Source: NAC 1-D-408-5.

correspondence with the Polish community in Ethiopia. In 1933, the LMiK-affiliated Research Institute commissioned Wiesław Knake, an engineer directing the construction of the highway connecting Ethiopia to British Sudan,⁹ to examine the possibilities of colonial expansion. In consequence,

Knake reported to Warsaw that Ethiopia was a country that was not friendly to Europeans: a competition arena of Western corporations and a dump for criminals and swindlers.¹⁰

The reason for Addis-Ababa's courting of Warsaw was the desire to find powerful allies that would contain an Italian threat whose origins dated back to the "Scramble for Africa" of the

⁷ "State Armament Factories to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," January 24, 1931, 2/322/1791, MSZ, AAN.

⁸ Jażdżewski, "Notatka radcy w Wydziale Wschodnim o stosunkach polsko-etiopskich," 391.

⁹ Emil Faust, "Polacy w Abisynii," *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, October 25, 1935, 2–3; "Polacy w Abisynii," circa 1935, I.303.4.1886, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego, CAW WBH.

¹⁰ "Wiesław Knake to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," April 1, 1933, 2/464/3/335, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

late nineteenth century. According to a memorandum written at the Brühl Palace, it was Britain that in the Treaty of London (1891) permitted Italy to extend a protectorate over Ethiopia. Ethiopia's Menelik II, however, was able to outmaneuver its new "protector" with the help of France and Russia. In 1896 the Italian military expedition to Ethiopia suffered a devastating defeat at Adwa and in December 1906 Britain, France, and Italy signed an agreement in which they promised to respect the independence of Ethiopia. After World War I, during which Menelik II's successor supported the Central Powers, Britain and France installed Taffari Makonen (future Emperor Haile Selassie) as Ethiopia's regent.¹¹ In another memorandum, the director of the Near Eastern Section at the Brühl Palace, Aleksander Zawisza, explained that after World War I Mussolini shirked consulting Britain and France about his actions toward Ethiopia and reacted angrily to the country's admission to the League of Nations in 1923. Selassie's later opposition to the Italian attempt to connect Somaliland and Eritrea by a railway cutting across Ethiopia further infuriated the Duce. By the time of the Walwal Incident of December 5, 1934, which became his *casus belli*, Mussolini decided to take the military path in a misguided effort to cement support for Fascism at home, to address domestic unemployment, to increase colonial trade, and to recreate a mythical Roman Empire.¹²

In 1934, as the Italian threat grew more ominous and Addis-Ababa tried to endear itself to Warsaw, the Polish government began to reciprocate the Ethiopian overtures. In the first place, the Polish-German Non-Aggression Pact signed in January generated a geopolitical equilibrium for Poland. More importantly, however, the Brühl Palace probably discerned parallels between

¹¹ "Kwestia Abisyńska," 1935, 2/322/6862, MSZ, AAN.

¹² Aleksander Zawisza, "Notatka kierownika referatu Bliskiego Wschodu w sprawie Etiopii i stosunków polsko-etiopskich," January 9, 1935, 26–31, doc. 12, PDD 1935. Concerning the Italo-Ethiopian war of 1935, also see A.J. Barker, *The Civilizing Mission: A History of the Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935-1936* (New York: The Dial Press, 1968); Angelo Del Boca, *The Ethiopian War, 1935-1941* (University of Chicago Press, 1969); Anthony Mockler, *Haile Selassie's War: The Italian-Ethiopian Campaign, 1935-1941* (New York: Random House, 1984).

Ethiopia's conduct and Liberia's, with which the LMiK was in the process of negotiating the "treaty of friendship."¹³ In any case, the State Export Institute, in cooperation with the foreign ministry, dispatched an agent Bohdan Wojewódzki to Addis-Ababa to inspect the possibility of activating trade with Ethiopia.¹⁴ In April 1934, while Makarczyk was in Monrovia, Wojewódzki



Figure 3. The Ethiopian cavalry on the move. Its own troops being no match for the modern Italian army, Addis-Ababa was forced to import foreign weapons and wished that some of them would come from Warsaw. Source: NAC 1-E-47.

wrote to the Polish delegation in Cairo about attending an official breakfast with the Ethiopian foreign minister. Sensing his great interest in intensifying closer relations with Poland, the Polish envoy assured him that an Ethiopian delegation would be

welcomed in his country and mentioned that it could tour Poland's military industry.¹⁵

Wojewódzki's intuited that Ethiopia's wish was for a closer partnership with Poland. In the following month, the Polish guest was invited to an official dinner with Haile Selassie and a couple of U.S. dignitaries. During a private audience, the Emperor told the Polish delegate that Ethiopia needed European products and hinted that Polish imports, especially, would be preferable. Selassie then expressed his deep interest in establishing regular economic and diplomatic relations with Poland and stated his "complete trust in Poland." After his conversation with the monarch,

¹³ In fact, being the only independent states in Africa, Ethiopia and Liberia coordinated their foreign policies. See Ibrahim K. Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slavery, 1914-1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

¹⁴ Jażdżewski, "Notatka radcy w Wydziale Wschodnim o stosunkach polsko-etiopskich," 392.

¹⁵ "Bohdan Wojewódzki to the Legation in Cairo," April 23, 1934, 2/322/5368, MSZ, AAN.

Wojewódzki also spoke to the country's minister of military affairs, who suggested that Ethiopia would soon need about five thousand rifles to replace unsatisfactory Belgian firearms.¹⁶ (Figure 3) By July, the Brühl Palace facilitated a shipment of samples of Polish tobacco products to Wojewódzki in Addis-Ababa, but no guns followed.¹⁷

The possibility of Promethean colonialism in Ethiopia resurfaced a couple of months later. In November 1934, a certain Georges Ibrahim, a “translator of Ethiopian languages” at the Coptic Christian Patriarchate, approached Alfons Kula, the Polish delegate in Cairo, Egypt. Kula reported that Ibrahim was not only working for the Patriarchate but was also Haile Selassie's unofficial envoy to the Middle East.¹⁸ Speaking in the name of his emperor, Ibrahim asked the Polish government to dispatch a diplomatic mission to Addis-Ababa to establish political and economic relations. In exchange, Haile Selassie was offering to reciprocate by granting Poland a series of privileges, ranging from commercial discounts to settlement concessions. Ibrahim suggested that, with time, Poland could also send military and technical advisors to Addis-Ababa and that a Polish diplomat, as a “representative of a country non-engaged in an active policy of territorial-colonial expansion,” could advise the Emperor in European politics.¹⁹ In response, Kula expressed his surprise at the haste with which Ethiopia approached Poland and stated that his country “was not intending to carry out any colonial or colonialist expansion.”²⁰ At the end of the conversation, Ibrahim admitted that Haile Selassie was expecting a military confrontation with Italy any moment and was searching for “friendship and support among European states that were unengaged

¹⁶ “Bohdan Wojewódzki's report from dinner with Haile Selassie,” May 4, 1934, 2/322/5368, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁷ Jan Wszelaki, “P.III.57-a/Ab/5 przesłania próbek wyrobów tytoniowych,” July 5, 1934, 2/322/5368, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁸ Alfons Kula, “Raport Chargé d'affaires a.i. poselstwa w Kairze o możliwościach nawiązania stosunków polityczno-handlowych z Etiopią,” November 22, 1934, 716, doc. 308, PDD 1934.

¹⁹ Ibid., 717.

²⁰ Ibid., 718.

colonially, or at least not in proximity [of Ethiopia].”²¹

Kula quickly noted the scale of the Promethean opportunity that was presenting itself to Poland and that it was time-sensitive. He offered the Brühl Palace his own opinion of Ibrahim’s overtures in a commentary attached to the report, writing that Poland’s “struggle for independence and the ways in which it liberated itself from foreign brutality” served as a “force of attraction and enchantment for the Muslim world, which desires to cast off the bonds of protection that European powers impose.” Kula suggested, therefore, that “for the stateless nations of the East, or for those whose sovereignty is only hypothetical, Poland is the only European power that (...) can assist them without posing a threat of colonial extermination [*groźba kolonizacyjno-eksterminacyjna*] to them.”²² Alluding to the impending Italian invasion, the Polish delegate in Cairo encouraged Warsaw to act swiftly to draw maximal benefits from Ethiopia’s unenviable situation: “Abyssinia is the only gigantic area where Poland could still lay its hands if it acts immediately, not letting new circumstances preempt it in the near future and close the door for our political-demographic penetration completely.”²³

Beside Ibrahim, Haile Selassie also confided his desire to engage Poland in Jacques Faitlovitch (Faitlowicz), a Polish-Jewish linguist and scholar of ancient Jewish communities in Ethiopia.²⁴ According to Kula, Faitlovitch was extending his services to the Brühl Palace but his only objective was to “settle a certain number of Jewish emigrants from Germany in Abyssinia under the guise of greatest deference and sacrifice for the Polish cause.”²⁵ This was not the first

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 718–19.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Concerning Faitlovitch’s research in Ethiopia, see Daniel Summerfield, *From Falashas to Ethiopian Jews: The External Influences for Change C. 1860-1960* (Psychology Press, 2003).

²⁵ Kula, “Raport Chargé d’affaires a.i. poselstwa w Kairze o możliwościach nawiązania stosunków polityczno-handlowych z Etiopią,” 720.

time Faitlovitch courted Polish diplomats in the name of the emperor: Juliusz Dzieduszycki's letter to the Jewish scholar suggests the latter's role in facilitating the Polish delegation to Selassie's coronation.²⁶ Moreover, in December 1933 the anti-Semite Adolf Nowaczyński had warned his audience about the growing influence of Faitlovitch and a certain "Frau Hirtel" in Ethiopia.²⁷ Nevertheless, the Polish military intelligence called the Jewish scholar "a very nice and decent man" and pointed out that Faitlovitch had received a national decoration from Poland for the discovery of a black Jewish tribe in Ethiopia during his missionary activities.²⁸ Whatever the perception of the Jewish linguist in Warsaw might have been, his lobbying on behalf of Ethiopia was initially effective.

In late 1934, the Brühl Palace entered into trade negotiations with Berhane Marcos, Ethiopia's consul in Cairo, suggesting an exchange of weapons for coffee if Addis-Ababa could not pay in hard currency.²⁹ In consequence, on December 26, 1934 Poland's ambassador in Paris, Alfred Chłapowski, and Ethiopia's delegate, Tekle Hawaryat, signed the "Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Settlement."³⁰ The Brühl Palace's economic consultant, Jan Wszelaki, pointed out that its third article granted Poland greatest privileges in the two areas indicated in its name: commerce and settlement.³¹ Warsaw might have been able to acquire these advantages from Addis-Ababa thanks to the Walwal incident of early December, which made the Italian threat appear ever closer. For the same reason, however, the Polish government was not in a hurry to ratify the treaty. Wojewódzki returned to Poland early in the year, without replacement.³² Moreover, Faitlovitch's

²⁶ "Juliusz Dzieduszycki to Jacques Faitlovitch," August 21, 1930, A.50/109, Polish Legation in Cairo, PISM.

²⁷ Adolf Nowaczyński, "Frau Hirtel 'nie lubić' Herr Hitler," *Gazeta Warszawska*, December 3, 1933, 4–5.

²⁸ "Polacy w Abisynii."

²⁹ Alfons Kula, "Legation in Cairo to Warsaw," January 11, 1935, 2/322/5368, MSZ, AAN.

³⁰ Zawisza, "Notatka kierownika referatu Bliskiego Wschodu w sprawie Etiopii i stosunków polsko-etiopskich," 33.

³¹ Jan Wszelaki, "Uzasadnienie," January 15, 1935, 2/322/5366, MSZ, AAN.

³² Jażdżewski, "Notatka radcy w Wydziale Wschodnim o stosunkach polsko-etiopskich," 392.

lobbying the Polish government to complete the ratification did not elicit a positive response from Warsaw.³³

Beyond the Ethiopians and their allies, it was also the Polish military intelligence, which featured Promethean leaders like Tadeusz Schaetzel, that encouraged Warsaw to pursue an independent policy in Ethiopia. The sympathies of the *Dwójka* seemed to lie with the Africans, with one agent writing from Rome about Ethiopians “defending themselves” against Italy’s “imperialist” aims.³⁴ In another report, the author wrote about “small acts of malice (*świństewka*) that a 43-million Italian nation inflicts upon 10 million half-wild Ethiopians.”³⁵ In September, a journalist and petty arms dealer named Tadeusz Medyński was engaged to establish contact with the Polish community in Addis-Ababa and to acquire additional information about the military maneuvers and humanitarian situation.³⁶ In one of his first reports, Medyński asked the *Dwójka* to send gas masks to the local Polish community.³⁷ By the end of the year, the Polish agent joined the station of the Red Cross in Addis-Ababa (later in Dessa).³⁸ He was to acquire autopsy results of poisoned soldiers and civilians as evidence of Italy’s use of chemical weapons in Ethiopia.³⁹ Moreover, in January 1936, Medyński was asked to transport fragments of clothing from gassed individuals to Warsaw, with the author of the letter explaining that Poland’s Red Cross wished to supply “our black friends” with more gas masks to protect them from the “aggression of rapacious

³³ Jan Wszelaki, “Nr.49/Ab./3. W sprawie stosunków polsko-abisyńskich,” February 15, 1935, 2/322/5366, MSZ, AAN.

³⁴ “Report concerning the Italian-Ethiopian conflict for the Eastern Bureau,” May 18, 1935, I.303.4.2240, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego, CAW WBH.

³⁵ “Report concerning the Italian-Ethiopian conflict for the Eastern Bureau,” May 28, 1935, I.303.4.4034, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego, CAW WBH.

³⁶ “Charakterystyka dwóch polskich jeńców w niewoli włoskiej,” February 27, 1936, I.303.4.1886, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego, CAW WBH.

³⁷ “Tadeusz Medyński to the Second Department,” September 25, 1935, I.303.4.1886, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego, CAW WBH.

³⁸ “Charakterystyka dwóch polskich jeńców w niewoli włoskiej.”

³⁹ “Engineer Harski to the Bureau East of the Second Department,” January 18, 1936, I.303.4.1886, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego, CAW WBH.

Rome.”⁴⁰ After his return to Poland in March 1936, Medyński filed a report describing the Italian destruction of the Tafari Makonen Hospital in Dessa.⁴¹ Furthermore, the intelligence supplied the foreign ministry with pictures of mutilated Ethiopians.⁴²

Despite Ethiopian overtures and intelligence reports showing instances of Italian brutality during the invasion, the Brühl Palace made its Promethean colonialism in Ethiopia contingent upon the outcome of the crisis and the international responses that it precipitated. Already in January 1935, Aleksander Zawisza, the director of the Near Eastern Section, noted in an aide-mémoire that “we are dealing with a conscious and purposeful Italian aggression.”⁴³ While acknowledging Poland’s “doctrinal and already somewhat traditional attitude toward all sorts of imperialist symptoms of international politics of great powers,” Zawisza suggested that defending Ethiopia openly through diplomatic channels would likely leave Warsaw isolated and that Beck should approach the matter with a cool head.⁴⁴ His superior shared his caution. In March, while leaving the final decision to the military, Beck told Schaetzle that selling arms to Addis-Ababa was politically inconvenient, given Poland’s relations with Italy.⁴⁵ Moreover, Warsaw deemed the Ethiopian request for Polish aviation experts unacceptable, given the current geopolitical climate.⁴⁶ Selassie’s government was only able to purchase twelve Mauser-type light machine guns for testing from Poland.⁴⁷

In May 1935, Jerzy Matusiński, Poland’s consul in New York, informed Warsaw that

⁴⁰ “Message to Tadeusz Medyński from an unidentified sender,” January 28, 1936, I.303.4.1886, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego, CAW WBH.

⁴¹ “Meldunek Medyńskiego z pobytu w Abisynii,” April 21, 1936, 1, I.303.4.1886, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego, CAW WBH.

⁴² “Photographs of mutilated Ethiopians,” 1935, 2/322/6862, MSZ, AAN.

⁴³ Zawisza, “Notatka kierownika referatu Bliskiego Wschodu w sprawie Etiopii i stosunków polsko-etiopskich,” 31.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴⁵ Jan Szembek, “Rozmowa z min. Beckiem i min. Schaetzlem,” March 16, 1935, 242–43, *Diariusz I.*

⁴⁶ Jan Starzewski, “Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Embassy in Paris,” April 19, 1935, 2/322/5368, MSZ, AAN.

⁴⁷ “Telegram from Alfons Kula to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” April 11, 1935, 2/322/5368, MSZ, AAN.

Faitlovitch proposed establishing a limited Polish-Jewish settlement in Ethiopia to facilitate imports from Poland. In addition, the Jewish scholar repeated Haile Selassie's request for Poland to create a permanent diplomatic post in Addis-Ababa and to send along sanitary, financial, and (especially) military experts. Naturally, Faitlovitch offered himself as one of such advisors.⁴⁸ In response, the Brühl Palace communicated that it was aware of Faitlovitch's position in Ethiopia but would only take advantage of his connections once the situation cleared up.⁴⁹ By September, it was now Zawisza reporting to Michał Łubieński, the director of Beck's cabinet, about his meeting with Faitlovitch in Rome, where Faitlovitch supplied him with intelligence information about Japanese military shipments to Ethiopia and encouraged Poland to follow suit to secure its commercial and settlement interests. Faitlovitch also introduced Zawisza to the Ethiopian chargé d'affaires in Rome, Negadras Afevork Chevre Yesus.⁵⁰ Despite these renewed overtures from the Ethiopian side, it was decided, however, that Faitlovitch would not be granted his wish to visit Warsaw for further negotiations.⁵¹

Beck's Geopolitics and the Colonial Question

Warsaw's rejection of Addis-Ababa's overtures was a function of its broader foreign policy. In 1922 the Weimar Republic signed the Treaty of Rapallo with the Soviet Union, whereby the two former partitioning powers exchanged military technology and conducted joint clandestine military training. Piłsudski's approach to containing this German-Russian rapprochement was the "policy of equal distances," or the policy of balance, according to which Poland would maintain

⁴⁸ "Jerzy Matusiński to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," May 28, 1935, 2/322/5366, MSZ, AAN.

⁴⁹ "Tadeusz Kobylański to the Consulate in New York," June 5, 1935, 2/322/5366, MSZ, AAN.

⁵⁰ "Aleksander Zawisza to Michał Łubieński," September 9, 1935, 2/322/5366, MSZ, AAN.

⁵¹ "Tadeusz Kobylański to the Embassy in Rome," September 30, 1935, 2/322/5366, MSZ, AAN.

proper relations with each of its powerful neighbors without drawing closer to any one of them.⁵² As the Marshal's health declined in the mid-1930s, the responsibility for this policy passed to Beck (Figure 4). Under his leadership, which lasted until September 1939, Poland's international actions became more assertive, but at the expense of its relations with Western powers, especially with France.⁵³ In effect, Beck decided to maintain equal distances not only between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union but also, to some extent, between the democratic camp and the Axis. His occasional diplomatic fence-straddling between the Western and revisionist powers was, in turn, interpreted as aiding Hitler in his conquest of Europe.⁵⁴ Beck's attitude toward Ethiopia was an expression of this "policy of equal distances" as it was applied to the West. He was reluctant to



Figure 4. Józef Beck was a reluctant supporter of the world order emanating from Geneva, which he considered left-leaning and biased to the benefit of the great powers. Source: NAC 1-A-2450.

alienate the Italians, perceived as Poland's potential allies against the Germans. In July, Beck told his delegate to the League of Nations, Tytus Komarnicki, that Warsaw "did not need to move to the fore": Poland was not a "colonial country" and did not know Italy's exact intentions. In the League of Nations, Poland should back a unanimous

⁵² Concerning the "policy of equal distances," see Marek Kornat, "The Polish Idea of 'The Third Europe' (1937-1938): A Realistic Concept or an Ex-Post Vision?," *Acta Poloniae Historica* 103 (2011): 101-26; Marek Kornat, *Polityka zagraniczna Polski 1938-1939: cztery decyzje Józefa Becka* (Gdańsk: Oskar, 2012).

⁵³ Concerning the origins of the Beck-France antagonism, see Mariusz Wołos, "Dossier Józefa Becka: jeszcze raz o przyczynach antagonizmu pułkownik Beck - Francja," *Czasy Nowożytne* 13 (2002): 211-46; Mariusz Wołos, "Józef Beck : espion allemand ?," *Revue historique des armées*, no. 260 (September 15, 2010): 45-53.

⁵⁴ See Magnus Brechtken, "«...La Géographie demeure». Frankreich, Polen und die Kolonial- und Judenfrage am Vorabend des Zweiten Weltkriegs," *Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte* 25, no. 3 (1998): 29-60; Henry L. Roberts, "The Diplomacy of Colonel Beck," in *The Diplomats, 1919-1939*, ed. Gordon Alexander Craig and Felix Gilbert, vol. II (Atheneum, 1968), 579-614.

decision if one could be reached, in line with the “collective system.”⁵⁵ Beck repeated these instructions to Komarnicki one week later but also ordered the delegate to abstain from acting against Italy explicitly.⁵⁶

At the end of the month, in an internal note, Tadeusz Gwiazdoski, a high official at the Brühl Palace, outlined Beck’s views regarding the Italian-Ethiopian conflict in more detail. According to Beck, Britain’s defense of Ethiopia was in reality an instrumental use of the League of Nations to protect its own interests: “albeit dressed in the beautiful attire of humanitarianism, justice, defense of the League Pact, etc., [England] actually wants the entire world to assist in the defense of its purely British and crucial imperial interests (Egypt, Sudan, the road to India, its fear of stirrings among colored nations).”⁵⁷ Beck believed, moreover, that Britain’s defense of Ethiopia was playing two camps against each other, one of which consisted of “laborists, pacifists, and the 2nd International” and desired the collapse of Fascist Italy.⁵⁸ This, in turn, contradicted the policies of the late Marshal: according to the foreign minister, Piłsudski had wished Warsaw to pursue a foreign policy completely independent from both the “syndicate of dictators” [Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin] and the “pacifist-liberal International.”⁵⁹ In this manner, Warsaw’s neutral attitude toward the threat to Ethiopia largely resulted from the foreign minister’s broader skepticism of Geneva as subject to Western imperial interests.

Notwithstanding Beck’s dislike of Geneva, Polish diplomats still used its structures to work

⁵⁵ Józef Beck, “Notatka naczelnika Wydziału Organizacji Międzynarodowych: instrukcja ministra spraw zagranicznych dla delegata przy Lidze Narodów w sprawie konfliktu etiopskiego,” July 22, 1935, 522, doc. 229, PDD 1935.

⁵⁶ Józef Beck, “Instrukcja ministra spraw zagranicznych dla delegata przy Lidze Narodów w sprawie stanowiska Polski wobec sporu włosko-etiopskiego,” July 29, 1935, 536, doc. 237, PDD 1935.

⁵⁷ Tadeusz Gwiazdoski, “Notatka naczelnika Wydziału Organizacji Międzynarodowych: podsumowanie wypowiedzi ministra spraw zagranicznych na temat sporu włosko-etiopskiego,” July 31, 1935, 539–40, doc. 239, PDD 1935.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 541.

out solutions to international crises. In early September, Poland agreed to join a special committee for Ethiopia, which consisted of Great Britain, France, Spain, and Turkey, as a representative of the non-colonial powers. In a statement for the Polish press agency “Iskra,” Beck suggested that Poland’s participation in the committee derived from its membership in the Council, which meant that prestige played a role in his decision.⁶⁰ However, on September 23 the “Committee of Five” declared its role as factually terminated, given Mussolini’s relentless claims to political and military control over Ethiopia, and returned the responsibility for mediating the conflict to the Council.⁶¹ In early October, just several days before the invasion, Beck told his secretary, Jan Szembek, that the League would not be able to solve the crisis but that Warsaw would “take the stance of defending the authority and position of the League.”⁶²

Warsaw continued to proclaim neutrality and to work through the League of Nations after the invasion of Ethiopia finally took place at the beginning of October.⁶³ Beck backed the League’s decision to impose anti-Italian sanctions while making it clear that it was despite Poland’s “deep sympathies for the Italian nation” and done only in condemnation of the Italian government’s “methods of rape in international politics.” He also underlined that the sanctions should be carefully drafted and applied universally, without any consideration given to Britain’s “special imperial interests.”⁶⁴ According to Szembek, the complete application of sanctions to the export of Polish coal, which was three fourths of all Polish exports to Italy, would cause an economic

⁶⁰ Józef Beck, “Wywiad udzielony przedstawicielowi ‘Iskry’ w Genewie w sprawie udziału w Komitecie Pięciu dla zbadania konfliktu włosko-abisyńskiego,” September 7, 1935, 172, *Przemówienia*.

⁶¹ Józef Beck, “Telegram szyfrowy ministra spraw zagranicznych (z Genewy) o rozmowie z ambasadorem Włoch na temat konfliktu włosko-etiopskiego,” September 23, 1935, 594–95, doc. 260, PDD 1935.

⁶² Jan Szembek, “Rozmowa z Beckiem,” October 1, 1935, 353, *Diariusz I*.

⁶³ Jan Szembek, “Notatka podsekretarza stanu z rozmowy z ambasadorem Włoch o stanowisku Polski w sprawie sporu włosko-etiopskiego,” October 2, 1935, 605, doc. 266, PDD 1935.

⁶⁴ Mirosław Arciszewski, “Notatka delegata przy Lidze Narodów z rozmowy ministra spraw zagranicznych z brytyjskim ministrem ds. Ligi Narodów,” October 10, 1935, 614, doc. 273, PDD 1935.

collapse.⁶⁵ In the meantime, the Polish intelligence seemed to play both sides of the conflict. In November, Mussolini's secretary Giuseppe Bastianini asked Beck to stop alleged clandestine shipments of Polish firearms to Ethiopia.⁶⁶ As Italian troops advanced deeper into the African country, however, Warsaw set out to amend its relations with Rome. In March 1936, the Imperial Delegation of Ethiopia reminded Polish diplomats about their promise to ratify the "Treaty of Friendship." In response, the Brühl Palace communicated to the Ethiopians that, given changes in Poland's trade policy, the treaty would require renegotiation.⁶⁷ By May 1936, Addis-Ababa fell, Haile Selassie sought political refuge in British territory, and Italy's king was proclaimed Emperor of Ethiopia. Considering the conflict as factually finished, Beck lifted the anti-Italian sanctions in early July.⁶⁸

The Italian aggression against Ethiopia marked the turning point in the Polish government's distancing itself from Promethean colonialism. At the same time, Beck could not simply ignore what he saw as the emergence of the Colonial Question, given his idea of Poland's international power. To his French counterpart, Pierre Laval, Beck once stated that "Poland was not a Great Power (*Wielkie Mocarstwo*)" because it did not "practice world politics but only regional politics."⁶⁹ Beck claimed that for him, his country's great-power status had not meant that Poland had a "world policy" but only that it "could not be the object of any international bargains"

⁶⁵ Jan Szembek, "Okólnik podsekretarza stanu w związku z antywłoskimi sankcjami Ligi Narodów," October 15, 1935, 623, doc. 279, PDD 1935.

⁶⁶ Tytus Komarnicki, "Raport delegata przy Lidze Narodów o rozmowie z ambasadorem Włoch w Warszawie," November 20, 1935, 687, doc. 310, PDD 1935.

⁶⁷ "Imperial Legation of Ethiopia in Paris to the Polish Embassy in Paris," March 22, 1936, 2/322/5367, MSZ, AAN; Jan Starzewski, "Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Embassy in Paris," April 30, 1936, 2/322/5367, MSZ, AAN.

⁶⁸ Józef Beck, "Telegram szyfrowy ministra spraw zagranicznych (z Genewy) do MSZ i do ambasady w Rzymie o zniesieniu przez Polskę sankcji antywłoskich," July 3, 1936, 361–62, doc. 171, PDD 1936.

⁶⁹ Józef Beck, "Notatka ministra spraw zagranicznych z rozmów z ministrem spraw zagranicznych Francji o stosunkach wzajemnych i sprawie paktu wschodniego," January 19, 1935, 72, doc. 28, PDD 1935.

because it respected itself.⁷⁰ His contemporary subordinates, however, understood Beck's great-power orientation differently. Michał Łubieński, for example, described his superior's belief in Poland's great-power potential as the "curse of our political line" stemming from the historical memory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and from the antiquated, nineteenth-century idea that a great power was one that could decide the fate of other nations and continents: the latter an inaccurate one, given the interconnectedness of the modern world.⁷¹ Łubieński's statement does not necessarily contradict Beck's own disclaimers: likely, the latter did not believe that Poland was already a "great power" but that it should aspire to the status.

Beyond Beck's great-power considerations, the Brühl Palace also came under increasing pressure from its own ranks to address the Colonial Question emerging in the international forum. Wiktor Podoski, a consultant at the Anglo-Saxon Section, argued that colonial revisionism was forcing Warsaw to take its own stance toward what he perceived as the collapsing colonial system.⁷² He suggested that Poland should demand former colonies of the Reich, repeating the old arguments about colonies serving as its compensation for the partitions and the German destruction of Polish lands during World War I.⁷³ In response to such pressure, Beck began to acknowledge that Poland should, in fact, clarify its stance. In an exposé presented to the Sejm's Commission of Foreign Affairs on January 15, 1936, the foreign minister still argued that "Africa is a distant land in which we do not have direct interests" and that Poland should not carry out policies "above its status" (*ponad stan*).⁷⁴ At the same time, however, the minister pointed out that Poland's precarious

⁷⁰ Józef Beck, *Final Report* (R. Speller, 1957), 38.

⁷¹ Michał Łubieński, *Refleksje i reminiscencje*, ed. Marek Kornat (Warsaw: Kancelaria Sejmu, 2012), 85–86.

⁷² Wiktor Podoski, "Notatka kierownika referatu anglosaskiego w sprawie polityki kolonialnej," September 3, 1935, 573, doc. 249, PDD 1935.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 574.

⁷⁴ Józef Beck, "Exposé wygłoszone w Komisji Spraw Zagranicznych Sejmu," January 15, 1936, 191–92, Przemówienia.

geographic position did not allow it to remain idle while the great powers decided the fate of Ethiopia and, the implication was, that of the international system.⁷⁵

It was not only Mussolini's colonial revisionism that undermined the international system and encouraged Beck to address the Colonial Question, however, but also the Reich's demands for the return of its former colonies. It has already been shown that Weimar Germany wished to contain the Polish "colonial action" in Angola in the early 1930s, which it viewed as geopolitically undesirable and in conflict with its own interests. Starting in the mid-1930s, already under Hitler, both state and party agencies of the Third Reich monitored Polish newspapers for instances of colonial discourse.⁷⁶ The infamous German censorship agency (*Publikationsstelle*) in Berlin-Dahlem, for example, was tasked with deciding the appropriate reaction to the LMik's depiction of Stefan Szolc-Rogozński, whose legacy was used to lay a Polish claim to the former German colony of Cameroon.⁷⁷ Likewise, the Polish consular network in the Reich investigated German colonial discourse and actions thoroughly, worrying that Britain or France might decide to return some of the former German colonies to the Reich.⁷⁸ In fact, to appeal to the British and Americans, the Germans presented their colonial claims not only as a question of international morality but also economic equilibrium, with the leading Nazi economic expert Hjalmar Schacht arguing that a strong German industry with a direct access to raw materials benefitted the entire world and especially eastern Europe.⁷⁹ In effect, at least for a while, Warsaw and Berlin laid competing claims to the same colonies to block each other.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 192.

⁷⁶ NS 43/344, Außenpolitisches- Amt der NSDAP, BAL.

⁷⁷ "German Colonial Society to the Publikationstelle in Berlin-Dahlem," May 5, 1935, R 153/1373, Publikationsstelle Berlin-Dahlem, BAL.

⁷⁸ See, for example, 2/474/1.10/419, Ambassade RP w Berlinie, AAN.

⁷⁹ See, for example, Hjalmar Schacht, "Germany's Colonial Demands," *Foreign Affairs* 15, no. 2 (January 1937): 223–34.

Once it became clear that Italy would attack Ethiopia, the British considered appeasing Germany in Africa to prevent another colonial war from breaking out, which worried Polish diplomats, since they believed that any strengthening of the Reich would be to Poland's detriment. In September 1935, the British leader Samuel Hoare delivered a statement in Geneva, suggesting, albeit in imprecise terms, a new division of "colonial raw materials." By November, the ambassador in London, Edward Raczynski, reported that Stanley Baldwin's government made overtures to Berlin to test the ground for a colonial appeasement.⁸⁰ While underlining that Whitehall had not started any official negotiations with Wilhelmstrasse, Raczynski suggested that Baldwin attempted to lure Hitler into a British internationalist imperial project with a vague promise of "participation in the economic exploitation of colonies."⁸¹ In January 1936, the Interdepartmental Committee of the British government had prepared a "Memorandum on the Freedom of Access to Colonial Raw Materials," but it was concluded that Whitehall would not take any action regarding the issue in Geneva.⁸² Still, the British, the document stated, "had to deal with the colonial aspirations of non-colonial Powers." The memorandum also stated that "in practice this means the colonial aspirations of Italy, Germany and Japan, for, though other Powers such as Poland have shown signs of becoming 'colonial-minded,' their aspirations need not yet be taken seriously."⁸³

It was unacceptable for Warsaw that London should appease Berlin, especially if its own claims would not be respected. In February 1936, the Polish chargé d'affaires in London, Leon

⁸⁰ Edward Raczynski, "Raport ambasadora w Londynie o polityce Wielkiej Brytanii wobec konfliktu włosko-etiopskiego," November 2, 1935, 656, doc. 297, PDD 1935.

⁸¹ Ibid., 657.

⁸² "Freedom of Access to Colonial Raw Materials. Note by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs," January 17, 1936, CAB 24/259/15, Memoranda (GT, CP and G War Series), War Cabinet and Cabinet, TNA (U.K.).

⁸³ "Interdepartmental Committee on Freedom of Access to Colonial Raw Materials," January 1936, CAB 24/259/15, War Cabinet and Cabinet, Memoranda (GT, CP and G War Series), TNA (U.K.).

Orłowski, pointed out that Hoare's politically motivated statement had generated responses from the Royal Institute of Foreign Affairs, encouraging Lord Lugard's project of a new mandate system in particular. Moreover, reported Orłowski, members of the Labor Party expressed interest in calling for a world conference to deal with the question of former German colonies and related economic issues. At the same time, Lloyd George's offer to appease Berlin with other powers' colonies, in particular those under Belgian and Portuguese control, faced criticism from many sides.⁸⁴ Britain became further amenable to the idea of a colonial appeasement after the German remilitarization of the Rhineland in March as to contain further German moves in Europe. Certain institutional changes in Germany indicated that Hitler might welcome such a present, since in June the Nazi regime dissolved all independent colonial associations in the Reich and incorporated them into one state-controlled *Reichskolonialbund*.⁸⁵ In the same month, the British colonial appeasement of Germany came close to fruition as Oswald Pirow, the Union of South Africa's defense minister known for his German sympathies, sojourned in London to discuss the matter.⁸⁶

The reports sent to the Brühl Palace during Pirow's stay in London soothed its worries that Britain was giving bilateral satisfaction to the Reich but also reinforced its understanding that a mutation to the colonial system was at hand. Raczyński reported that Pirow, while opposed to the return of the former German colonies specifically, promoted an internationalist form of appeasing Berlin.⁸⁷ In fact, the South African statesman suggested to Eden that reinstituting Cameroon and Togoland or selling a portion of Angola to the Reich would be acceptable as long as "the presence

⁸⁴ Leon Orłowski, "Raport polityczny No. 4/46. Stanowisko angielskie wobec zagadnienia kolonialnego," February 19, 1936, A.12.P35/5, Embassy of the Polish Republic in London, PISM.

⁸⁵ St. Lubomirski, "N/14/1/37 w sprawie organizacji Reichskolonialbundu," January 12, 1937, 2/474/1.10/422, Ambasada RP w Berlinie, AAN.

⁸⁶ "Wyciąg z raportu politycznego Ambasady R.P. w Londynie," June 5, 1936, 2/322/2183, MSZ, AAN.

⁸⁷ Edward Raczyński, "Raport polityczny No. 16/36. Sprawa możliwości odstąpienia mandatów," July 23, 1936, 2/322/3228, MSZ, AAN.

of Hitler or Mussolini” in East Africa was discouraged.⁸⁸ Pirow and Eden agreed, moreover, that preempting Hitler with a colonial proposition of this sort was advisable.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, the British “Plymouth Committee” deemed a joint British-French return of Cameroon and Togoland to Germany possible provided that the political benefits outweighed moral and strategic objections, for example the possibility of a shift back to the unabashed exploitation of the indigenous people at Nazi hands.⁹⁰ Among the alternatives that could be used to appease the Reich in lieu of a territorial transfer, the committee listed: Anglo-German condominium, inclusion of German associations in colonial governments, facilitating German immigration, ensuring equality of treatment of German enterprises, and granting administrative rights to a German corporation.⁹¹ Warsaw would later keep all of these options in mind as its experts drafted its own approach to the Colonial Question.

The resolve of the British government to reach a colonial understanding with Berlin waned along with the summer’s passing. In June, Raczyński informed the Consular Department that Labor and Liberal propositions to subject all mandates to stricter international control served as a “red cloth for the imperialist group of conservatives, the so-called ‘die-hards.’”⁹² By the end of August, Eden rejected the idea of transferring any mandates to Germany as a concept that “would inevitably raise grave difficulties,” but left the door open for future discussion.⁹³ Warsaw received confirmation of the British reluctance to compromise in the colonial realm in reports from other

⁸⁸ “Record by Mr. Eden of a Conversation with Mr. Pirow,” June 9, 1936, 482, doc. 355, DBFP 1919-1939 2/XVI.

⁸⁹ “Record by Mr. Eden of a Conversation with Mr. Pirow,” June 25, 1936, 520–21, doc. 380, DBFP 1919-1939 2/XVI.

⁹⁰ “Report of the Plymouth Committee on the Transfer of a Colonial Mandate or Mandates to Germany,” June 9, 1936, 795–96, appendix III, DBFP 1919-1939 2/XVI.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 783–94.

⁹² Edward Raczyński, “Raport polityczny No. 15/36. Sprawa możliwości odstąpienia mandatów,” June 30, 1936, 2, 2/322/3228, MSZ, AAN.

⁹³ Antoni Jażdżewski, “Raport polityczny No. 18/36. Sprawa możliwości odstąpienia mandatów,” August 20, 1936, 2/322/3228, MSZ, AAN.

diplomats, too. After speaking to high-ranking British officials, Wiktor Podoski wrote that most British citizens would not sacrifice any territory of the empire for another nation's benefit. Moreover, they believed that keeping the Colonial Question unresolved prevented the Germans from shifting their attention to central Europe.⁹⁴

Meanwhile, as appeasement schemes unrolled, the government-friendly press in Poland pointed out contradictions in the international system. In May 1936, an editorial in the *IKC* cited an opinion that Britain's campaign to strip the Reich of *all* of its colonies had been short-sighted, since the German concessions in China and the Marshall Islands could have contained Japanese imperialism.⁹⁵ Three months later, one "F.Z." warned that Italy's "colonial expedition" against Ethiopia was the last of its kind, since the world was now completely under European occupation. "Colonial wars," however, would continue, according to the author. In particular, the Middle East was experiencing "wars of liberation" from European dominance and would likely experience intra-European conflicts, too, since the "current state of colonial possession" was "so unequal and so incongruent with the current balance of political, military, and economic powers that it cannot be maintained, given the growing appetites [of hungry powers]."⁹⁶ In September 1936, another *IKC* editorial argued, in line with Beck's thinking, that "the League of Nations became a smokescreen for British imperialism, for the 'red fronts' of Europe, and for all those 'pacifists' and doctrinaires in [its] secretariat that, in the name of their doctrine, would be ready to see the world burn."⁹⁷ In addition, the editorial featured a racist remark that "one should not look for precedents for European affairs in Africa [since] the countries of cultured white nations are

⁹⁴ "Wiktor Podoski to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," August 21, 1936, A.12.P35/5, Embassy of the Polish Republic in London, PISM.

⁹⁵ "Nowy podział kolonii na porządku dziennym," *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, May 23, 1936, 3.

⁹⁶ F. Z., "Ostatnia wyprawa kolonialna - ale nie ostatnia wojna...," *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, August 3, 1936, 1.

⁹⁷ "Stare błędy odżyły!," *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, September 24, 1936, 1.

something quite different from the colored empire of the king of kings.”⁹⁸

The Colonial Question as a Demographic Problem

While the international situation forced the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to note the geopolitical significance of what it perceived as the newly emerging Colonial Question, the LMiK started to depict it as a systemic problem related to demographics. In response to the increased demand for colonial-related material stemming from the rise in tensions over Ethiopia, the LMiK partnered with the *IKC* to publish a special section of the newspaper called the “Maritime and Colonial Courier.”⁹⁹ This insert appeared between February and June only, but the newspaper continued to print all sorts of news labeled “Abyssinia,” including tangentially related stories, for example a report about the recruitment of African-Americans in Harlem to fight for Ethiopia.¹⁰⁰ Most importantly, the crisis created the opportunity to write stories about Stefan Szolc-Rogosiński and other explorers whom activists claimed for Poland’s colonial record.¹⁰¹ New elements began to appear in the LMiK’s colonial discourse, however. Italy was now presented as a colonial power different from the more traditional empires of Britain and France, with its attack against Ethiopia described as essentially inevitable. Most importantly, the Italian demographic justification of the invasion was accepted to suggest that contradictions in the international system made colonial conflicts unavoidable and that Poland was entitled to territory in Africa because of its own overpopulation.

In a study titled *The Abyssinian Question and Polish Colonial Theses*, activist Roman

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Marek Arpad Kowalski, *Dyskurs kolonialny w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, *Studia Ethnologica* (Warsaw: Instytut Etnologii i Antropologii Kulturowej Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2010), 197–98.

¹⁰⁰ “Dzielnica murzyńska Harlem w N. Jorku organizuje pomoc dla Abisynii,” *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, August 1, 1935, 5.

¹⁰¹ “Kolonja afrykańska, która miała być polską...,” *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, October 27, 1935, 9.

Piotrowicz explained Italy's colonial expansion in Ethiopia in demographic and economic terms. He described Ethiopia as a country of great economic promise: three times larger than Poland and featuring different natural environments, from "deserts burned in the sun" and "joyful, fruitful pastures" to "deep valleys and muddy spaces."¹⁰² According to him, however, Ethiopia's fertile soil and mineral riches remained poorly exploited under its "bellicose ruling race" and required more efficient European administration.¹⁰³ At the same time, Piotrowicz also argued that, after national unification in 1860, more than 620,000 emigrants had annually left agricultural Italy, whose countryside was seen as overpopulated (150/sq. km).¹⁰⁴ Therefore, in line with the Fascist logic of replacing *emigrazione senza bandiera* (emigration without a flag) with an emigration that was "organized and tightly and organically connected to the metropole," it was understandable that Italy would wish to conquer Ethiopia and turn it into an emigration outlet where Italians would acquire raw materials necessary for the metropole's industrial output.¹⁰⁵ He suggested that it was France that brought a "half-barbarian and not yet consolidated" country that continued to practice slavery into the League of Nations to protect its own imperial interests.¹⁰⁶

Piotrowicz quickly extrapolated his justification of Italian aggression to relate the conflict to what should become Poland's future "colonial theses." He proposed an evolution of the Colonial Question whereby acquisitions turned into security valves for overpopulated countries such as Italy and Poland, suggesting that a transformation of certain colonies into mandates should take place.¹⁰⁷ According to him, it was this newly projected international model of colonialism that Warsaw needed to take into account to secure its own interests. Piotrowicz was surprised, however, that his

¹⁰² Roman Piotrowicz, *Zagadnienie abisyńskie a polskie tezy kolonialne* (Warsaw: Kolumna, 1935), 4–5.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 24–28.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 56–62.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 65.

fellow colonial activists had so far only put forward “mysterious” demands, claiming that Poland was one of the legal successors of the German Empire with claims to its former colonies.¹⁰⁸ Instead, the author suggested, Warsaw should negotiate for demographic and economic concessions in the colonies with Geneva.¹⁰⁹ After all, the legal status of a territory did not necessarily determine its colonial status: Piotrowicz argued that the British still enjoyed greatest privileges in their former mandate of Iraq.¹¹⁰

Likewise, articles that appeared in the *IKC* also referenced demographic and economic factors to explain, if not to justify, the aggression. In January 1936, for example, Władysław Oszelda pointed out that between 1921 to 1931, the Italian population had increased from 38,724,800 to 41,230,050. Still, despite Mussolini’s public works and other means to combat unemployment, the problem of Italian overpopulation continued: “One must search for an outlet for this concentrated national energy, confined to the walls of its own state, or else the boiling pot of Italy’s population will explode.”¹¹¹ Oszelda argued that Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia was a “stimulus [for Poland] to start a bargain in the international arena of the right of national existence according to the population growth in given states.”¹¹² According to him, the Polish opinion regarding the Colonial Question had not yet been heard, despite the fact that as many as 10,000,000 Polish emigrants around the globe and 8,800,000 unemployed peasants still living in Poland could not “use their strength and skills to multiply their material welfare and to serve their nation.”¹¹³ Like Piotrowicz, Oszelda considered the League of Nations the entity to which Warsaw should

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 81–82.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹¹¹ Władysław Oszelda, “Włochy i Polska - dwa najbardziej przeludnione kraje Europy. O męskie i stanowcze wystąpienia Polski w sprawie emigracyjnej i kolonialnej,” *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, January 20, 1936, 2.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

address itself. Poland required emigration outlets, especially in South America, the argument continued, where the environment did not “overwhelm our emigrant with its civilizational superiority,” and Warsaw had to take advantage of the League to negotiate for them.¹¹⁴ While many statesmen and commentators argued that its authority and influence had been diminished, Oszelda represented the pragmatic approach, still viewing the League as a useful forum in which certain claims could be marketed in internationalist terms.

Beyond the *IKC*, it was also other respectable but more politically neutral Polish newspapers that recommended Poland’s alliance with the revisionist powers in identifying the Colonial Question as a demographic one. In the conservative *Czas*, for example, Jerzy Wodzicki deemed Germany’s demands to have its colonies back justified, given what he considered that country’s continuous population growth, and desirable, since they would pave the way for Poland’s own aspirations. He argued that Warsaw should march toward colonies “hand in hand” with Berlin and suggested that London and Paris had refrained from incorporating former German colonies directly into their empires only because it was politically advisable at the time.¹¹⁵ In another article, Wodzicki once again expressed understanding for Italy’s invasion of Ethiopia, describing it as an expansion from “small patches of desert colonies” like Eritrea into a “more bountiful” Ethiopia. He also argued that Poland, a historically continental nation, would be perfectly content with only 100,000 sq. km of colonial territory overseas and attacked the “colonial monopoly” of Britain and France for turning that “humble” ambition into a utopian dream.¹¹⁶

In many ways, the LMiK and its allies in the press echoed their own arguments from the previous years, pointing out that Poland’s countryside, especially in the southeastern provinces,

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Jerzy Wodzicki, “Zagadnienia kolonialne a Trzecia Rzesza,” *Czas*, August 16, 1935, 5.

¹¹⁶ Jerzy Wodzicki, “Nowy podział kolonii najbliższą koniecznością,” *Czas*, August 24, 1935, 7.

was overpopulated. In 1936, according to one outlandish but not entirely untypical estimate, technological backwardness and agricultural parcellation made as many as 9,000,000 of Poland's 32,000,000 inhabitants "redundant" and therefore destined for emigration.¹¹⁷ Nonetheless, before 1936, most of the colonial milieu had constructed this demographic-economic problem in terms of dragging Poland into maritime modernity through Polish-Catholic commercial expansion into Africa, as they believed that African raw materials acquired would spur Polish industrial development and reduce unemployment. As the LMiK used Italian demographic arguments, however, its interpretation of the Colonial Question began to associate it once again with emigration. Unlike in the 1920s, however, this time it was not a question of managing Polish-Catholic populations overseas but of targeting the Jewish minority for all but forced emigration.

The Colonial Milieu and the Jewish Question

Intellectuals across the Polish interwar political spectrum believed in the existence of a Jewish Question, claiming that any large Jewish presence within the borders of the newly created state limited its hard-fought-for independence and debilitated it altogether. Many of these elites began to embrace Jewish emigration as a "solution" to the "problem," which they sometimes marketed as Jewish colonial expansion in order to gain legitimacy. Already in 1918, Ignacy Grabowski, a playwright living in Warsaw, argued that, liberated from the partitioning powers, Poland now required a "liberation" from the Jews through their departure. He described them as his country's "internal enemies, a half-concealed disease, a cancer that consumed our economic and intellectual efforts," and as a people cynically pretending to be "Polish patriots."¹¹⁸ His "solution" to this "internal partitioner" (*wewnętrzny zaborca*), although one that he deemed

¹¹⁷ F. Z., "Fałszywa cyfra, która zaciężała nad Polską...", *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, November 8, 1936, 1.

¹¹⁸ Ignacy Grabowski, *Dla żydów - Palestyna*, Nasza Biblioteczka Ludowa (Warsaw: Placówka, 1918), 1.

unrealistic given their alleged preference for enjoying the privileges of “civilization” in Europe, was sending Jews to Palestine and beyond: “If Palestine alone turns out to be too small for all Jews, incapable of their full nourishment and development, then, having their own state, free and independent, Jews will be able to expand to the great adjacent expanses of Asia Minor and Africa in a colonial manner.”¹¹⁹ In this way, Grabowski turned into an anti-Semitic promoter of Zionism insofar as it attracted Jews away from Poland, offering them space for “colonial” expansion elsewhere.

It was not only members of the extreme Right such as Grabowski that imagined the removal of Jews from Poland to colonial spaces. Members of the colonial milieu, too, campaigned for Jewish emigration all the more strongly once they noticed that Jewish merchants could also serve as instruments of Poland’s colonial expansion. In 1930, while preparing for his departure to Angola in Lisbon, Michał Zamoyski made contact with a Polish-Jewish wine merchant named W. Terlo, whose relatives lived in Łuck. He proved friendly to the count and introduced him to the local Polish-Jewish community and businessmen with connections in Angola, which Zamoyski called a “Palestinian gentry” (*szlachta z Palestyny*).¹²⁰ In April 1935, the State Export Institute also recognized the commercial potential of Polish Jews in Africa, with its official recommending a merchant Dawid Nadel as a good intermediary to use for launching Polish iron exports to Ethiopia.¹²¹ The *Dwójka* identified him as “wealthy, noble, and generous,” and, “naturally, a Jew.”¹²² Likewise, in October of the same year, during his journey across Central America, Stefan Iwanowski expressed his surprise that Warsaw had not appointed any representatives to

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹²⁰ Michał Zamoyski, “Lisbona,” n.d., 2–3, 35/84/208, Archiwum Ordynacji Zamoyskich w Kozłówce, APL.

¹²¹ Władysław Wolski, “State Export Institute to G. Josephy,” April 18, 1935, 2/464/2/22, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

¹²² “Polacy w Abisynii.”

Venezuela, a country rich in oil and subject to penetration from Germany, or to Columbia, the only country in Central America with which Poland conducted considerable trade. Iwanowski proposed using the several hundred Jews from Poland residing in Bogota as commercial agents in the region: “Jews, and mostly Jews of the worse ghetto sort that rarely bring us any splendor and rather quite the opposite, are still natural representatives of Poland.”¹²³ In a strange twist, Jewish intermediaries, despite being portrayed in anti-Semitic ways, turned into the country’s commercial agents as long as they helped break the Western trading monopoly.

At the same time, members of the colonial milieu believed that nowhere could Jews play a more important role as Poland’s colonial agents than in Palestine, where a large-scale Polish emigration to the British mandate could be manipulated to Poland’s advantage. Indeed, the numbers of Polish departures for Palestine seemed impressive in an age of immigration restrictions: according to British calculations, 107,958 Polish Jews had come to the mandate in the years 1919–1935.¹²⁴ The opportunities stemming from this phenomenon did not escape the attention of people that eventually associated themselves with the LMiK. Janusz Makarczyk, for example, traveled to Palestine as early as 1925 to determine whether the settlement of Polish-Jewish colonists could be permanent and useful for Warsaw. He argued that, once in Palestine, these colonists allegedly acquired a newly found appreciation of their old country’s culture and difficult economic situation, and, most importantly, found ways of cooperating with Poland for mutual benefits.¹²⁵ Makarczyk promoted the expansion of the Polish consular network in the region to promote trade, suggesting that a beneficial commercial exchange could be established whereby Palestinian oranges and tobacco were packaged into Polish-made boxes and cigarette tubes,

¹²³ “Stefan Iwanowski to Wiktor Drymmer,” October 14, 1935, 3, 2/322/3367, MSZ, AAN.

¹²⁴ Royal Institute of International Affairs, *The Colonial Problem* (Cambridge University Press, 1937), 357.

¹²⁵ Janusz Makarczyk, *Przez Palestynę i Syrię: szkice z podróży* (Warsaw: Gebethner i Wolff, 1925), 87–90.

respectively.¹²⁶ Likewise, in May 1926, *Wychodźca* published a series of articles promoting Polish-Palestinian trade, with one of them praising the British mandate's potential for economic development thanks to its growing textile industry and good transportation system.¹²⁷ Despite the anti-Semitic terms used in that discourse, some Jewish activists seemed to deduce from this Polish perception of Palestine both an economic opportunity and a chance to play a role in the Polish colonial project. (Figure 5) The Polish-Jewish philosopher and pedagogue Samuel Stendig (1900–1943)¹²⁸ argued, for example, that “Poland’s *raison d’état* correctly rests itself upon this [Jewish] emigrant, for in Palestine he is not only a pioneer of Polish colonial thought but also paves the way for Poland’s economic expansion into countries and states that comprise Albion’s monopoly.”¹²⁹

In late 1933, the LMiK launched a “Palestinian Section” and appointed Makarczyk as its director.¹³⁰ By January 8, 1934 Poland’s “Pro-Palestina Committee” was established under Prince



Figure 5. The Polish consul in Palestine (middle-left) tours a Polish-Jewish settlement, one of many inadvertently serving as agencies of Polish influence in the region (1931). Source: NAC 1-D-1819.

Zdzisław Lubomirski, president of the Senate’s Commission of Foreign Affairs, after a series of negotiations took place between Orlicz-Dreszer and Nahum Sokolow, president of the World Zionist Congress.¹³¹

¹²⁶ Ibid., 88–104.

¹²⁷ “Palestyna (IV),” *Wychodźca*, May 30, 1926, 4–6.

¹²⁸ Edyta Gawron, “Samuel Stendig,” in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, vol. 43 (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 2004), 415–16.

¹²⁹ Samuel Stendig, *Polska a Palestyna: stosunki wzajemne w dobie obecnej* (Warsaw: J. Neuman, 1935), 8–9.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 26.

¹³¹ Ibid., 15.

The “colonial” aspect of the “Pro-Palestina Committee” cannot be underestimated, especially since its founders included Mieczysław Fularski, Ferdynand Ossendowski, Józef Targowski, and Apoloniusz Zarychta, in addition to intellectuals such as writer Zofia Nałkowska.¹³² It was the “Palestinian Section” of the LMiK that campaigned for the committee’s establishment, and the two entities remained intertwined at the personal level (Makarczyk).¹³³ Despite its name theoretically including Arabs, and despite its largely non-political projects such as the creation of a Levantine shipping line, the “Pro-Palestina” was pro-Jewish insofar as it favored Zionism over the national aspirations of the Arabs: Ossendowski was its only member defending the rights of Arabs in the British mandate, who believed that supporting Jews was a thankless task.¹³⁴ According to him, while large sums of money flowed from Poland to Palestine and many Polish-speaking colonists lived in the mandate, the local Jewish press continued to accuse the Polish government of anti-Semitism, especially in the context of Warsaw’s anti-communist measures, which, in his opinion, targeted Polish Jews only accidentally.¹³⁵

Notwithstanding such opposition, the increased efforts of pro-Palestinian circles resulted in a blossoming of relations with Polish-Jewish settlers in Palestine in the mid-1930s, during a time when tensions between Jews and Arabs had not yet encouraged the British to lower immigration quotas drastically for the former group or to consider partitioning the mandate. In the economic realm, the GAL established a permanent line established between the Romanian port of Constanza and the Palestinian port of Haifa. Between September 1933 and November 1934 only, one of the line’s signature ships, the SS “Polonia,” carried 21,462 passengers, both emigrants and

¹³² Ibid., 13.

¹³³ “Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer to Józef Beck,” November 1933, 2/322/10546, MSZ, AAN.

¹³⁴ Ferdynand Antoni Ossendowski, *Gasnące ognie: podróż po Palestynie, Syrii, Mezopotamii* (Gebethner i Wolff, 1934), 323; Witold Michałowski, “Śladami Pana Balcera,” in *Teki Sarmatów* (Pruszków: Rewasz, 2009), 154.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 135–44.

tourists, from Poland to Palestine, as well as more than 5,000 tons of cargo.¹³⁶ Warsaw's other "colonial" instrument in Palestine was the Tel-Aviv office of the PKO, which transferred almost 1,000,000 zł (~\$189,000) in the other direction in the second half of 1934 only.¹³⁷ Moreover, commercial institutions such as the Polish-Palestinian Chamber of Commerce in Tel-Aviv and the Polish-Palestinian Commercial Association in Łódź contributed to an increase in trade between Poland and the entire Middle East.¹³⁸ In June 1936, in a letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the British High Commissioner for Palestine indicated that Poland's trade balance with the mandate was in the former's favor and only the "depressed economic situation of Polish Jewry" made exporting certain Palestinian products such as brandy difficult.¹³⁹ In September of the same year, the French chargé d'affaires in Berlin, Pierre Arnal, pointed out that while Berlin supported the Arabs, Warsaw "seemed to understand the advantages, at least commercial, that transplanted Israelites are capable of bringing to their country of origin."¹⁴⁰ Nor did the British miss the fact that Polish Jews in Palestine worked to Poland's benefit, with London persuading Warsaw to lower duties on Palestinian citrus fruits by arguing that these "pioneers of Polish economic influence in the Near East" required a larger surplus market abroad.¹⁴¹ In addition, Palestine welcomed famous Polish artists such as Hanka Ordonówna and Eugeniusz Bodo, while the Hebrew-language newspaper *Davar* dedicated a series of articles to Adam Mickiewicz to commemorate the centennial of the epic poem *Pan Tadeusz* (1834).¹⁴² In footage entitled "From Jerusalem to Tel-

¹³⁶ Stendig, *Polska a Palestyna*, 25.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 31–34.

¹³⁹ "Arthur Wauchope to William Ormsby-Gore," July 1936, CO 852/64/3, Economic General Department and Predecessors, Colonial Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁴⁰ "M. Arnal, Chargé des Affaires de France à Berlin, à M. Delbos, Ministre des Affaires étrangères," September 24, 1936, 415, doc. 285, DDF 1932-1939 2/III.

¹⁴¹ "Note on visit to Poland," November 1937, 4, CO 852/126/4, Economic General Department and Predecessors, Colonial Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁴² Stendig, *Polska a Palestyna*, 20–21.

Aviv” (1939), the Polish filmmaker Romuald Gantkowski demonstrated his country’s influence in Palestine as encapsulated in spaces such as the Polish consulate, a Catholic medical center, and a local office of the Polish airline “LOT.”¹⁴³

The LMiK’s role in creating a relationship between Poland and some Jewish inhabitants of Palestine, which was supposed to benefit mostly the former, might have nevertheless encouraged some Polish Jews to join its ranks. By January 1938, the LMiK’s membership became 99% ethnically Polish, with national minorities, especially the “Ruthenians,” generally absent.¹⁴⁴ Still, earlier documents indicate the existence of a significant Jewish membership in the Lublin province, in particular. On June 29, 1933, a Jewish rabbi named Szapiro was reported praying for the “Polish sea” during a religious service in a synagogue in Lublin.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, “thanks to the initiative of Jewish activists, including those from Lublin (...), the administration started to incorporate Jewish society into the LMiK.”¹⁴⁶ Another Jewish man, Boruch Szarfsztajn, served as a deputy leader of the LMiK in Janów Lubelski and was described as having a good moral standing in the town.¹⁴⁷ By March 1936, yet another Jewish activist, Abraham Finker, had established a Jewish branch of the LMiK in Szydłowiec, near Radom, and was actively promoting its expansion into local schools.¹⁴⁸

The colonial milieu promoted Palestine as the major destination for Jewish emigrants who,

¹⁴³ Romuald Gantkowski, “Z Jerozolimy do Tel-Awivu,” 1939, MF.0128, FNAI.

¹⁴⁴ “LMiK to the General Inspector of the Armed Forces,” January 3, 1938, I.302.4.77, Generalny Inspektorat Sił Zbrojnych, CAW WBH.

¹⁴⁵ *Sprawozdanie Okręgu Lubelskiego Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej za rok 1933* (Lublin: Zakłady Graficzne J. Pietrzykowskiego, 1934), 28.

¹⁴⁶ *Sprawozdanie Okręgu Lubelskiego Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej za rok 1934* (Lublin: Zakłady Graficzne J. Pietrzykowskiego, 1935), 19.

¹⁴⁷ “Janów Podlaski Starostwo to the Provincial Office in Lublin,” March 8, 1935, 35/403/2/2459, Urząd Wojewódzki Lubelski, APL.

¹⁴⁸ “LMiK in Końskie to Abraham Finkler,” March 20, 1936, A.49/15, Polish Consulate General in Tel-Aviv, PISM.

despite being excluded in Poland, would still be embraced as its economic agents abroad. By 1936, however, the Brühl Palace took advantage of the geopolitical reshuffle brought about by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in order to relate the Colonial Question to Jews in another way. Polish officials would now argue that Jewish emigration from Poland to spaces other than Palestine was more necessary than their potential role as Polish economic agents.

The Official State Perspective: The Jewish and Colonial Questions Merged

In the second half of 1936, growing anti-Semitism and the desire to stem the growth of the Polish-Jewish population encouraged the Brühl Palace to view the Colonial Question not only in geopolitical but also in demographic terms. Léon Noël, the French ambassador in Warsaw since March 1935, positioned himself as a critic of Polish anti-Semitism in letters to Quai d'Orsay, while also appealing to certain anti-Semitic stereotypes.¹⁴⁹ In a message from January 1938, Noël pointed out that more Jews lived in Warsaw than in Palestine, many of them in sordid housing. He attributed Polish anti-Semitism to nineteenth-century Russian policies of dumping Jews in the “Pale of Settlement,” which corresponded to the central and eastern provinces of partitioned Poland, and to the recent migration of refugees from Germany and the Soviet Union to Poland.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, the lack of a Polish middle class also contributed to anti-Jewish policies like the creation of “ghetto benches” at the Jan Kazimierz University of Lwów, which the Germans encouraged to weaken the country and which pushed Jews toward communism, smaller local investments, and potential collaboration with foreign powers.¹⁵¹ Still, Noël subscribed to the Polish view that the number of Jews in Poland was too large to be assimilated and that many Jews, used

¹⁴⁹ W. Grzybowski, “Raport posła w Pradze: charakterystyka nowo mianowanego ambasadora Francji w Warszawie,” March 11, 1935, 190, doc. 80, PDD 1935.

¹⁵⁰ “Léon Noël to Yvon Delbos,” January 15, 1938, 1–5, 200PAAP/2, Papiers d’Agents, ADP.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 6–8.

to the historical political autonomy granted to their ancestors, allegedly separated themselves as much as the Poles separated them, establishing their own ghetto in the newly built Gdynia.¹⁵²

Scholarly explanations of Polish anti-Semitism in the modern period usually discuss the superstitious Catholic blood libel, the relative independence of Jewish institutions from the Polish-Lithuanian state, and the traditional position of Jews as economic intermediaries managing the estates of the gentry (*arenda*) and running an alcohol monopoly (*propinacja*).¹⁵³ By the outbreak of World War I, the persistence of Catholic superstitions and the gradual expansion of a fledgling Christian middle class in towns and cities had contributed to the emergence of anti-Semitism. Starting in the late nineteenth-century, the right-wing Endecja claimed to represent the political and economic interests of the Polish-speaking Catholic majority, which its ideologues identified as the only rightful constituents of the Polish nation.¹⁵⁴ After World War I, ethno-nationalists continued to fan the flames of anti-Semitism in the context of postwar destruction, economic crisis, and political instability, which facilitated the assassination of Poland's first president, Gabriel Narutowicz, whom the extreme Right labeled as a national traitor associated with iniquitous Jewish forces.¹⁵⁵ In governing circles, anti-Semitism became somewhat less audible in the aftermath of the May 1926 coup, given ensuing political stability and economic recovery.¹⁵⁶ By the second half

¹⁵² Ibid., 9–10.

¹⁵³ Gershon David Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (University of California Press, 2007); Adam Teller, *Money, Power, and Influence in Eighteenth-Century Lithuania: The Jews on the Radziwiłł Estates*, 2017.

¹⁵⁴ Brian Porter-Szücs, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth-Century Poland* (Oxford University Press, 2000); Theodore R. Weeks, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism: The "Jewish Question" in Poland, 1850-1914* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2006).

¹⁵⁵ Paul Brykczynski, *Primed for Violence: Murder, Antisemitism, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Poland* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2016).

¹⁵⁶ Grzegorz Krzywiec, "Czy państwo w Polsce pomajowej było czynnikiem antyżydowskim (1926–1939)? Stan badań i perspektywy badawcze," in *Państwo i społeczeństwo Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. Janusz Żarnowski, vol. 8, *Metamorfozy Społeczne* (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 2014), 369–73; Szymon Rudnicki, "Jews in Poland Between the Two World Wars," *Shofar* 29, no. 3 (2011): 4–23.

of the 1930s, however, the advent of National Socialism in Germany, death of the strongman Piłsudski, and socioeconomic decline resulted in a right-wing tilt of the Sanacja and its consolidation around the small circle consisting of Ignacy Mościcki, Edward Śmigły-Rydz, Felicjan Sławoj-Składkowski, and Józef Beck. Still reluctant to embrace anti-Semitism openly, this new regime of the “colonels” yielded to the ethno-nationalist camp insofar as it agreed that a gradual elimination of Jews from Poland was an inevitable and natural process that would ultimately strengthen the Polish (nation-)state.¹⁵⁷

One of the ways in which the “colonels,” and Beck in particular, intended to appease the Endecja was by encouraging Jewish emigration as a “solution” to what its activists constructed as the Jewish Question.¹⁵⁸ This way of thinking was not entirely new. As early as July 1921, a Polish diplomat stated that Jewish assistance in aiding emigration from Poland to Argentina pleased the Polish government, which was looking for an outlet for the “Jewish masses that are too great.” “Extending our care to [Jewish] emigrants and coming into contact with world-wide Jewish organizations might have a soothing effect on our relations with Jews,” the diplomat added.¹⁵⁹ It was not until about fifteen years later, however, that the Brühl Palace began to consider orchestrating Jewish emigration more seriously. In 1935, the responsibility for “Jewish affairs” in the foreign ministry was transferred from the Department of International Organizations to Wiktor Drymmer’s Consular Department. At the same time, the Ministry of Internal Affairs was deprived

¹⁵⁷ Alina Cała, *Żyd - wróg odwieczny?: antysemityzm w Polsce i jego źródła* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im. Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2012); Przemysław Olstowski, *Obóz pomajowy w województwie pomorskim w latach 1926-1939* (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 2008); Waldemar Paruch, *Od konsolidacji państwowej do konsolidacji narodowej: mniejszości narodowe w myśli politycznej obozu piłsudczykowskiego, (1926-1939)* (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1997); Szymon Rudnicki, “Anti-Jewish Legislation in Interwar Poland,” in *Antisemitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland*, ed. Robert Blobaum (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 148–70.

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, “O polski program emigracyjny,” *Gazeta Warszawska*, April 3, 1933, 7.

¹⁵⁹ Mazurkiewicz, “Do Konsulatu Rzplitej Polskiej w Buenos Aires w sprawie: emigracji żydowskiej,” July 6, 1921, 702/13/123, Polish Legation in Rio de Janeiro, PIASA.

of its own influence in determining responses to the Jewish Question, making the latter entirely a matter of foreign policy.¹⁶⁰ In line with this structural change, in an instruction dated April 20, 1936, Drymmer asked Polish diplomats to assess the possibility of expediting Jews to non-European regions. He stated his reasoning for issuing the instruction in the following way:

“Increasing Jewish emigration from Poland significantly is in line with the Polish government’s policy. In the present day, more than ever before the universal economic crisis makes it difficult for the Polish government to solve the Jewish problem at home, which stems from the Polish Jewry’s flawed economic structure. Seriously decreasing the Jewish population of Poland would certainly lead to tempering the acuteness of the question, decreasing the area of the resulting internal tensions of economic, social, and political nature while, at the same time, reducing the foreign attention paid to the situation of the Polish Jewry.”¹⁶¹

Inspired by this technocratic strand of anti-Semitism, Drymmer hoped that at least 30,000 young Jews could be sent overseas every year to “compensate” for the annual increase of the Jewish population. He underlined, moreover, that Jewish emigration to South America should be channeled to cities and agricultural areas that did not neighbor existing Polish colonies so that domestic tensions would not be replicated abroad.¹⁶² Although the two would still occasionally overlap, the Polish idea was no longer to use Jews as commercial intermediaries overseas, or instruments of colonial expansion, but rather to orchestrate their mass emigration apart from that of Polish Catholics.

¹⁶⁰ Wiktor Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce: wspomnienia żołnierza i państwowca z lat 1914-1947* (Kraków: Wingert, 2014), 192.

¹⁶¹ Wiktor Drymmer, “Instrukcja dyrektora Departamentu Konsularnego w sprawie emigracji osób narodowości żydowskiej,” April 20, 1936, 239, doc. 116, PDD 1936.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

In his memoirs, Drymmer justified his identification of Jews as quasi-alien as a reactive measure, arguing that anti-Semitism had become an anti-government “weapon” of the Endecja, which his establishment wished to disarm.¹⁶³ Claiming to eschew racial theories and religious superstitions, however, Drymmer himself painted a relationship between Poland’s Jewish Question and its demographic and economic problems: “[Peasants from] the overpopulated



Figure 6. Jews trading in a Kraków street circa 1926. The Polish government argued that too many Jews worked in “urban” professions, blocking the socioeconomic advancement of Polish Christians. Source: NAC 1-G-5642-4.

countryside, unable to find employment in agriculture, started to shift to small trade and artisanship, timidly at first and then dynamically. In these fields, they encountered an unexpected obstacle, the Jews, which, in

their pauperized mass of several million, had long seized control of the bazaars and stores in cities and towns. (Figure 6) The Jewish proletariat was willing to fight to the death for its socioeconomic position.”¹⁶⁴ Moreover, according to him, Poland’s unassimilated Jewish retailers allegedly inflated prices in the country and refused to offer their global connections to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, for which they could have served as intermediaries.¹⁶⁵ While drawing on anti-Semitic tropes, Drymmer described himself as simply a statesman attempting to mediate between savage anti-Semitic nationalists, which the state security hardly managed to contain, and unassimilated Jews, the latter “so numerous that mimicry [assimilation] did not seem necessary to

¹⁶³ Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce*, 192.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 202–3.

them.”¹⁶⁶

Some outside observers agreed that Drymmer camp’s intended to disarm the opposition. In 1937, the British ambassador, Howard Kennard, suggested to the Foreign Office that Poland’s establishment meant to attract moderate members of the Endecja with its Jewish emigration policies.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, in the same year, while expressing criticism of both anti-Jewish riots and emigration projects, Kennard essentially reproduced what Drymmer and the Brühl Palace put forward as an argument for Jewish emigration:

“The crisis in the agricultural areas has contributed to anti-Semitism in two ways. The hard-hit agriculturalist tends to blame the middleman for his misfortunes, the more so if he has little business ability. In Poland, the middleman is almost invariably a Jew, so that irritation at the middleman takes the form of bitterness against the Jew. Secondly, the peasant being unable to secure a livelihood for all of his sons on his already too small holding encourages some of them to move into towns and set up stalls in local markets or establish themselves as small craftsmen – tailors, shoemakers, and the like. But in the towns the young peasant finds himself faced with a Jewish “ring,” which is jealous of its position and fears that the establishment of Poles in handicrafts and trade will mean a rivalry which will lead to racial antagonism. The inexperienced Pole is in any case generally no match for the Jew, and, if his enterprise does not prosper, he is only too ready to have resort to the weapon of racial prejudice.”¹⁶⁸

It was this “problem” that became the topic of discussion at the Brühl Palace in the summer of

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 195–97.

¹⁶⁷ “Howard William Kennard to Anthony Eden,” April 27, 1937, FO 417/37, Confidential Print Poland, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁶⁸ “Report on Poland,” 1937, I.21-I.22, FO 371/20760/C8603, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

1936, as the foreign ministry prepared its official response to the collapse of the colonial status quo. While it was the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and British appeasement schemes that prompted Beck's cabinet to draft a series of theses regarding the Colonial Question, it was the imagined "Jewish" dimension of the demographic-economic problem that helped Polish officials determine the content of those theses.

Debating Poland's Colonial Agenda: Demographic vs. Economic Arguments

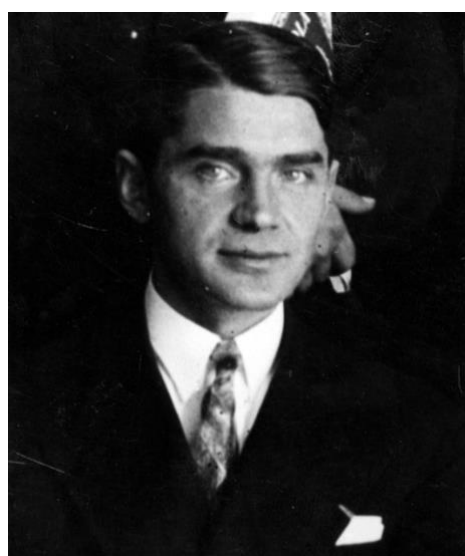


Figure 7. Wiktor Drymmer, the director of the Consular Department and eminence grise of the Brühl Palace, charged with the formulation of Poland's colonial aspirations in 1936.
Source: NAC 1-A-2529.

In the first half of 1936, Beck ordered Wiktor Drymmer (Figure 7) to formulate the ministry's expectations regarding the colonial system. In turn, the director of the Consular Department held a series of conferences with his colleagues to determine the appropriate form, timing, geographical direction, and legal basis of Warsaw's future colonial claims. The first one of these conferences took place on May 9, 1936 and featured Apoloniusz Zarychta (Emigration Division), Józef Potocki (Political Department), Władysław Kulski (Legal Department), and Jan Wszelaki, the

ministry's economic expert, among others. Drymmer himself perceived the Colonial Question foremost in relation to Poland's access to colonial sources of raw materials.¹⁶⁹ His opinion was reflected in the Brühl Palace's internal memo, which connected the matter to state security and state that Poland's defense budget of about 1,000,000,000 zł (~\$188,900,000), despite accounting for roughly half of the state's total budget, was only one-fifteenth of the Soviet Union's and one-twelfth of Nazi Germany's. It was argued that Poland's inability to invest in defense stemmed

¹⁶⁹ Tadeusz Gwiazdoski, "Protokół z konferencji w sprawach kolonialnych," May 9, 1936, 1, 2/322/2183, MSZ, AAN.

from its overall industrial retardation, which was in turn a result of the high cost of imported colonial raw materials.¹⁷⁰ According to the document, industrial development and military security would require stable and inexpensive supplies of coke fuel, iron ore, steel, aluminum, copper, and, to a lesser extent, oil.¹⁷¹

In contrast to Drymmer's economic definition of Poland's Colonial Question, Zarychta argued that, although further industrial development was the primary issue connected to Africa, "population arguments [for colonial expansion] are not invalid." According to him, the "Polish [Catholic] element" could be "concentrated" in a territory that could "secure the supply of raw materials to [our] processing industry," including more climatically moderate parts of Africa.¹⁷² He suggested drawing attention to the fact that Poland's population was the sixth fastest growing in Europe and eleventh fastest growing in the world. Zarychta was convinced that Warsaw could kill two birds with one stone by means of colonial claims, at the same time acquiring both sources of raw materials and emigration outlets, especially for Jews, for whom special colonial territories could be designated as "national homes" supplementary to Palestine.¹⁷³

Other conference participants did not share the view that colonies constituted a panacea for Poland's "problems," however, and suggested potential obstacles to putting forward claims in the international arena. Potocki, for example, pointed out that exploiting colonies economically required large capital, while Wszelaki argued that synthetic production of certain colonial raw materials, for example fibers, was possible and cheaper.¹⁷⁴ Moving the discussion forward, Kulski

¹⁷⁰ "Zagadnienie obrony Państwa a kwestia uprzemysłowienia i surowców kolonialnych," 1936, 1–3, 2/322/9583, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 3–7.

¹⁷² Gwiazdoski, "Protokół z konferencji w sprawach kolonialnych," May 9, 1936, 2–3.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 5–6.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

argued that Warsaw could propose the transformation of all colonies into mandates and suggest the channeling of Jewish emigration to French colonies, since Paris signaled that such a scenario was possible. In contrast, Wszelaki advised the ministry not to “make a fuss,” warning that such propositions could frighten “small powers” like Portugal.¹⁷⁵ In response, Zarychta agreed that Poland should not antagonize the “small powers” and should instead present itself as their partner, recalling the LMiK’s idea of creating cultural and economic condominiums in Africa.¹⁷⁶ In this manner, the first conference ended with an understanding that demographic reasoning was as legitimate as arguments concerning raw materials. In fact, for many of the participants the two constituted two sides of the same coin: emigration from Poland, and especially its Jewish form, would facilitate industrial development, as colonies served as both emigration outlets and sources of raw materials.

One month later, on June 18, 1936, Beck himself contributed to the discussion. He was quoted in an internal memo as stating:

“The current colonial system, which above all consists of metropolises drawing profits from their colonial possessions, is in the stage of breaking down. Today we stand before the increasingly self-imposing imperative of searching for new forms of solving the colonial problem in other ways. In consequence, it is necessary to ask oneself in what form we might receive something in this area. In any case, our course of action must take new developments into account instead of drawing from the premises that are doomed to annihilation.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 4.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 5–6.

¹⁷⁷ “Niepodpisana notatka na temat możliwości uzyskania kolonii przez Polskę,” June 18, 1936, 328, doc. 155, PDD 1936.

In this manner, Beck argued that a colonial system based upon economic exploitation would not last. Instead, the suggestion was, another sort of colonial expansion was in place, and the Brühl Palace debated proposing a demographic one, which was viewed as a politically safe option. Political safety would from now on become an important aspect to be considered in putting forward Poland's colonial claims.

The memo from June 18, 1936 suggested that Beck's wish was for Warsaw not to start any colonial initiatives of its own. Berlin, the thinking was, would likely tackle the Colonial Question in the next round of Locarno negotiations, and any Polish demands would only "pave the way" for the Germans. Moreover, "since we would likely aspire to a mandate over one of the former German territories, it would be difficult to prevent negative reactions in either camp [revisionist or democratic]."¹⁷⁸ Instead, it was suggested, the West would react with restraint if Polish claims merely subjected a series of "colonial issues" to international discussion.¹⁷⁹ It was also underlined that Poland should not demand colonies explicitly: "It is necessary to operate with other formulas without, under any circumstances, using the term 'colony.'"¹⁸⁰ Instead, Polish diplomats could lobby for "B" mandates, economic condominiums, and/or special concessions. Finally, it was noted that initiating appropriate propaganda domestically and abroad carried the additional benefit of communicating that Poland's territory could not absorb any more people and needed expansion itself: "This constitutes an important argument against any revisionism directed against us."¹⁸¹ At the same time, Warsaw was not to put forward arguments related to raw materials, since not all colonial empires allegedly possessed all the desired resources.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 329.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

Drymmer's second conference regarding the Colonial Question, which took place on June 22, 1936, reached similar conclusions regarding the political nature of future demands. The director of the Consular Department underlined that Beck's upcoming colonial campaign was not about colonies in a strictly administrative sense but about "bases of raw materials." In reaction, Zarychta responded with satisfaction that the ministry "was starting to speak a common language" as it interpreted the "current division of the world" as "unjust." He warned that the "current, abnormal situation" might result in another war and wondered if Warsaw should raise the "colonial problem" in Geneva during discussions concerning Ethiopia.¹⁸³ Łubieński, Drymmer, Potocki, and Gwiazdoski more or less agreed, however, that playing the colonial card at the moment would only ignite the issue further and would shift the League's attention away from the "Austrian Question," or the encroaching German Anschluss. They believed that it was better to wait until Geneva started to tackle the *causes* of the Italian invasion, or until the Germans raised the issue themselves.¹⁸⁴ Potocki, moreover, wondered whether Warsaw should demand a mandate or a condominium: both, according to him, required a series of exploratory studies, bilateral negotiations, and large investments.¹⁸⁵ Allowed the last word, Zarychta supported the idea of condominium, or administering a territory together with other powers, especially with "smaller countries" like Belgium and Portugal, since he believed that making that sort of demand would frame the Polish demands in internationalist terms. He suggested that future military conflicts could be contained if the colonial empires lifted their immigration quotas and made their colonial raw materials available to second-tier powers like Poland, which "did not possess money but valuable human

¹⁸³ Tadeusz Gwiazdoski, "Protokół z konferencji w sprawach kolonialnych," June 22, 1936, 1, 2/322/2183, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

material.”¹⁸⁶

By the end of June 1936, Drymmer’s informal committee thus agreed that Warsaw should wait for Berlin before tackling the Colonial Question and that Polish aspirations should be framed in internationalist terms such as mandates, concessions, and condominiums. Still, the Brühl Palace could not decide whether to present the League of Nations with demographic or economic arguments. Zarychta, a proponent of the demographic approach, proposed a racial slogan that would identify the Polish nation, or “race,” as “marching toward the equator,” and therefore as expanding, not as an object of expansion.¹⁸⁷ In a separate memorandum, Kulski also suggested that propaganda aimed at foreigners should stress Poland’s high population density and dispel the perception that it was a “nation without dynamism, whose territory is subject to its neighbors’ revisionism.”¹⁸⁸

Zarychta, Kulski, and others drew inspiration for their demographic ideas from contemporary writing that identified Poland’s population growth a sign of a nation’s health and dynamism. Already in 1933, Antoni Plutyński argued that Poland’s demographics would become an asset in its perennial rivalry with Germany, whose population growth was declining from a 10.8% increase in 1920 to only 4.7% in 1931.¹⁸⁹ Plutyński not only hoped that such a decline would lead to a decreased German bellicosity but also viewed it as a chance for Poland, whose nationals would either continue reproducing at the cost of their “comfort and wealth” or decrease their fertility. He disapproved of the latter option, however, describing it as the “way of greater wealth and comfort, the way of easier life for the individual,” but also as one that allegedly did not take

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 4–5.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 5.

¹⁸⁸ Władysław Kulski, “Notatka naczelnika Wydziału Prawnego na temat spraw kolonialnych,” 1936, 818, doc. 411, PDD 1936.

¹⁸⁹ Antoni Plutyński, *Bezdzietne Niemcy a Polska* (Warsaw: Gebethner i Wolff, 1933), 4.

into account the greater good of the state facing its historic opportunity of becoming more powerful than Germany.¹⁹⁰ Jerzy Smoleński of the Jagiellonian University, an expert close to the government, published similar arguments. He suggested that Poland possessed a better claim to emigration outlets than Germany and Italy, since, unlike those states, it supposedly did not have to carry out policies to encourage natural growth.¹⁹¹ The Polish government, the logic continued, could not reduce the nation's natural growth in a "neo-Malthusian" spirit, as population increase was essential for national survival during a time of crisis and the rate of births in Poland was falling anyway in parallel to those in Western Europe: from 35.2/1000 in 1927 to 26.2/1000 in 1936.¹⁹²

While ideas of supposed demographic dynamism resonated with the Brühl Palace in the second half of 1936, many experts still pointed out that making more economic arguments, in particular appeals to the concept of economic equality (*égalité économique*) in mandates, was the only legal way in which Warsaw could demand colonial satisfaction from Geneva. Kulski argued that it would be safest to ask for a new division of mandates, but, from a legal point of view, Article 22 of the League's Covenant did not allow the possibility of transferring a mandate from one state to another.¹⁹³ Warsaw could, however, maintain interest in "B" mandates, considered neither close to independence nor *de facto* colonies. Polish diplomats could also lobby the West for a seat on the Permanent Mandates Commission and support Lord Lugard's idea of turning all colonies into mandates.¹⁹⁴ In fact, the legal expert Kazimierz Sośnicki informed his colleagues that "B" mandates with open-door (*porte ouverte*) policies such as Togo, Cameroon, Tanganyika, and Ruanda-Burundi granted full economic equality only to the empires that controlled them, which

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 30.

¹⁹¹ Jerzy Smoleński, *Zagadnienia demograficzne i ich znaczenie dla państwa* (Kraków: Jagiellonian University, 1937), 148.

¹⁹² Ibid., 149–50.

¹⁹³ Kulski, "Notatka naczelnika Wydziału Prawnego na temat spraw kolonialnych," 819.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

could be challenged.¹⁹⁵ Since Warsaw had assigned special economic privileges to some of these mandates in return for the rights to which it was entitled anyway, it was argued, some of Poland's bilateral trade agreements could be renegotiated.¹⁹⁶ In response to these memoranda, Kulski and Zarychta discussed the best ways to renegotiate treaties with Britain and Belgium, the possibility of incorporating the right of settlement into them, and the feasibility of Poland's joining the Permanent Mandates Commission.¹⁹⁷

Lastly, Polish officials pitched the idea of proposing international monetary solutions to what they constructed as the Colonial Question. The economic expert Zygmunt Merdinger suggested the concept of introducing a special currency printed in all countries that exchanged raw materials, to be administered through an international institution.¹⁹⁸ Likewise, the LMiK's economic advisor in Liberia, Tadeusz Brudziński, argued that a simple "redistribution" of raw materials was not possible. He pointed out the more or less explicit connections between metropolises and their colonies through official administration, shipping lines, settlers, merchants, and industrialists, all of which allegedly handicapped colonial newcomers.¹⁹⁹ He opposed the idea of returning to international liberalism, however, arguing that autarchy was not an invention of European leaders but a response to a solstice of the free-market system.²⁰⁰ The final sign of the demise of liberalism was, according to him, the widespread abandonment of the gold standard. Brudziński proposed that abandoning gold was a logical tactic for the colonial empires, as it strengthened their currencies in relation to the rest of the world and allowed them to create

¹⁹⁵ Kazimierz Sośnicki, "Zakres 'porte ouverte' odnośnie mandatów," May 30, 1936, 2/322/2183, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁹⁷ "Protokół konferencji odbytej u p. Naczelnika W. Kulskiego w sprawie 'égalité économique' w mandatach," June 23, 1936, 2/322/2183, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁹⁸ Zygmunt Merdinger, "Polska wobec zagadnienia kolonialnego," 1936, 5–6, 2/322/9583, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁹⁹ Tadeusz Brudziński, "Notatka. Kolonie a zagadnienie walutowe," July 8, 1936, 1–6, 2/322/9582, MSZ, AAN.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

protective fiscal zones to the detriment of debtor countries and of their own colonies.²⁰¹ He argued, in a rhetoric that recalled Promethean colonialism, that suggesting an outright redivision of colonial territories would contract those colossal fiscal zones, thus supposedly benefiting both colonial newcomers and subjugated peoples.²⁰²

The “Colonial Theses”

Thanks to this series of conferences and memoranda, the Brühl Palace was able to determine what sort of arguments it should put forward to support Poland’s colonial aspirations (both demographic and economic), what it should ask for (mandates, condominiums, concessions), and what form its demands should take (addressed to Geneva and occurring after their German analogues). By the fall of 1936, the foreign ministry was therefore able to release a series of claims called “Colonial Theses.” The first of these argued that Poland was a “country of great dynamics and development potential,” with the fourth fastest growing population in the world, and that it therefore deserved its own sources of raw materials and emigration outlets.²⁰³ The second proclaimed that Poland required colonial fibers and minerals to further develop its textile and heavy industries to the level at which they might absorb the “surplus” population.²⁰⁴ In particular, Poland’s colonial acquisitions of some sort would supposedly liberate it from the need to finance its purchases of raw materials with underpriced exports and would eliminate Western intermediaries from its colonial trade.²⁰⁵ Lastly, the Brühl Palace made the technocratic anti-Semitic argument that Poland was home to an enormous number of Jews who possessed a “flawed social-professional structure.” Both the League of Nations, as an institution “representing the

²⁰¹ Ibid., 10–11.

²⁰² Ibid., 11–12.

²⁰³ “Tezy kolonialne Polski,” 1936, 1, 2/322/9581, MSZ, AAN.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 2–3.

²⁰⁵ “Tezy ekonomiczno-surowcowe,” 1936, 2/322/9581, MSZ, AAN.

interests of the Jewish nation,” and the British Empire, which was looking to find a way to ease the Arab-Jewish tensions in Palestine, should therefore assist Poland in solving the “problem” through the search for territories that Warsaw could claim as a mandate.²⁰⁶ Thus, for the Polish government the Jewish Question intersected with the Colonial Question insofar as “new settlement areas” for Jews might allegedly be found in Africa after the all-but-complete closure of the Americas, Palestine, and the Soviet Union (Birobidzhan) to Jewish emigration. Moreover, according to the foreign ministry, a mass departure of Jews would actually alleviate the problem of anti-Semitism, which, the argument went, stemmed from the concentration of Jews in artisanal and retail professions.²⁰⁷

In November 1936, the Brühl Palace issued a confidential circular that presented the theses in more detail to selected diplomatic posts abroad. In the first place, the document claimed that Poland’s population density, although average in absolute terms, was extremely high when one took into account the dearth of capital and stagnated industrial development that allegedly limited the absorption capacities of cities. In the years 1930-1936, Poland’s annual natural increase was identified as over 400,000, twice that of the more industrial Germany. The Brühl Palace rejected any “Malthusian ideas” to decrease the natural growth, however, claiming that maintaining the nation’s “dynamism is a condition of its power” and a “measure of its vitality.”²⁰⁸ Warsaw estimated the number of landless peasants at 5,000,000 and argued that neither a complex agricultural reform nor the draining of Polesie would afford them sufficient productive land.²⁰⁹ (Appendices 1-2) The emigration of this “surplus” population to particular destinations, where

²⁰⁶ “Tezy kolonialne Polski,” 3.

²⁰⁷ “Emigracja żydowska a zagadnienie kolonialne,” 1936, 5–6, 2/322/9583, MSZ, AAN.

²⁰⁸ Wiktor Skiński, “Okólnik Wydziału Prasowego w sprawie emigracji z Polski,” November 7, 1936, 657, doc. 338, PDD 1936.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 656.

they could supposedly plant and mine raw materials, was required to spearhead industrial growth. In fact, the foreign ministry pointed out, more than half of Poland's total imports in 1935 (~\$ 88,900,000 out of ~\$ 16,200,000) consisted of colonial raw materials, for which the country could not compensate with its own exports.²¹⁰ (Appendix 3)

In order to develop a technocratic anti-Semitic argument that reduced human beings to numbers, it was stated that “it was simultaneously a part of the larger emigration issue as well as [this issue's] somewhat distinct ramification.”²¹¹ Christians from the countryside, the argument went, could not emigrate to cities because of the “complete specialization of the Jewish population (...) in small trade and artisanship.”²¹² 40% of all Polish Jews allegedly worked as merchants and retailers, compared to only 2% of non-Jews, which was identified as the population's “socioeconomic flaw.”²¹³ Warsaw also pointed out that Poland's total Jewish population was about 3,000,000; the largest in Europe and second largest in the world.²¹⁴ Its growth in the years 1930–1934 occurred roughly at the same annual rate (13.9%) as that of the country's entire population. According to the report, however, in Białystok, Łódź, and Lublin provinces Jews accounted for more than one seventh of the population and for almost a third in Warsaw.²¹⁵ The foreign ministry underlined that only 30,703 Jews left Poland in the preceding year, which accounted for little more than half of the total emigration of 53,812 and resulted from the low British immigration quotas for Palestine from Poland.²¹⁶ (Appendices 4–5) In turn, the Brühl Palace wished to lobby the Western empires to open new areas to Jewish emigration, including Angola, Cyrenaica,

²¹⁰ Ibid., 655.

²¹¹ Ibid., 657.

²¹² Ibid., 658.

²¹³ “Memoriał MSZ w sprawie emigracji żydowskiej z Polski,” 1936, 811, doc. 410, PDD 1936.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 810.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 813–14.

Mesopotamia, Kenya, and Uganda.²¹⁷

By 1937, while refraining from underlining what it considered the “Jewish” aspect, the Brühl Palace articulated the demographic and economic theses officially for foreign audience. In the publication *The Problem of Emigration and Raw Materials in Poland*, technocratic arguments once again reduced Polish citizens to numbers on graphs and diagrams to be manipulated by state power. Because of the partitions, it was argued, Poland’s development could benefit neither from the freedom of trade and movement nor from the “technical and economic progress,” both of which had occurred in the nineteenth century.²¹⁸ It was pointed out that a shift from a liberal world to a world of autarchies made Poland’s backwardness difficult to escape, especially given its post-imperial status. In the first place, the annual emigration from Europe was now only a quarter of what it had been prior to World War II (250,000 as opposed to 1,000,000).²¹⁹ This decrease, combined with Poland’s annual average population growth of 450,000, supposedly resulted in “an army of 400,000–500,000 of new citizens of the state, entitled to a share of the social income, lowering the gross domestic income per capita and retarding the process of internal capitalization.” The non-agricultural sectors of the economy that could otherwise absorb the “surplus” population could not develop properly.²²⁰ Moreover, further exacerbating the situation was Warsaw’s purported need to purchase colonial raw materials with hard currency: “The outflow of hard currency (...) not only weakens the state’s financial resistibility but also largely reduces its ability to purchase machinery, posing an obstacle to the diversification of production and to lowering its costs.”²²¹ According to the Polish government, however, the problem of emigration could not be

²¹⁷ Ibid., 815–17.

²¹⁸ *Problem emigracyjny i surowcowy w Polsce* (Warsaw: Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, 1937), 5.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 6.

²²⁰ Ibid., 12.

²²¹ Ibid., 19.

separated from the problem of raw materials, since “settlement emigration (*emigracja osadnicza*) can produce raw materials heretofore imported into Poland.”²²²

To a large extent, the “Colonial Theses” encapsulated many views already adopted in 1933, now put in an official form addressed to foreign audiences, which, in particular, featured the call for emigration outlets and direct commercial connections to Africa in an age of immigration restrictions and trade monopolies. Most importantly, however, Warsaw recombined the demographic and economic arguments for colonial expansion, which it previously approached as separate, for the sake of incorporating Jewish emigration as one of Poland’s colonial “needs.” Featuring three distinctive but closely related subsets of arguments that followed each main case, the theses explained what the Polish government constructed as the country’s endemic problems affecting more than one area of public life. In this manner, Beck’s ministry expressed the LMiK’s decade-long program in an empirical way in relation to global processes, most likely in the hope of attracting the sympathy of internationalists and camouflaging the anti-Semitic underpinnings of the “Jewish” thesis.

Conclusion

In the years 1935–1936 the Italian aggression in Ethiopia and Poland’s geopolitical competition with Germany encouraged the Brühl Palace to address what it viewed as the newly emerging Colonial Question. In effect, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs abandoned the program of Promethean colonialism for the reasons of geopolitical inconvenience and reformulated the LMiK’s older colonial claims into a set of theses presented in internationalist terms to appeal to the Western public. It was what became constructed as the “Jewish” dimension of the country’s

²²² Ibid.

intertwined problems of agricultural overpopulation and industrial backwardness, however, that largely determined the content of the “Colonial Theses.”

In addition to the idea that Poland was chained to Western commercial intermediaries that inflated the prices of colonial raw materials and stifled industrial development, it was now also claimed that, domestically, the concentration of Jewish economic intermediaries in urban areas made socioeconomic advancement impossible for Polish Catholics. In turn, the acquisition of colonies as emigration outlets and sources of raw materials became viewed as a potential “solution” to both the Colonial and the Jewish Questions, which the Brühl Palace articulated in a set of arguments called the “Colonial Theses.” In contrast to the LMiK’s emotional appeals, Warsaw’s technocrats reduced human beings to statistics—a “problem” to be “solved” by the machinery of the state in cooperation with international bodies.

Chapter 6

In Hitler's Shadow: Beck's Colonial Agenda Abroad

“Anxiety about colonial demands by Poland prevents a positive attitude from being adopted [in Britain] toward our colonial claims.”¹

In the years 1936–1939, the “Colonial Theses” informed Józef Beck’s foreign policy. His diplomats expressed colonial aspirations in Geneva to find multilateral solutions to what they constructed as the demographic-economic problem, hoping for internationally guaranteed forms of access to colonial raw materials and emigration outlets, especially for Jews. As this internationalist campaign suffered from association with Axis revisionism, however, Beck shifted his approach from offering multilateral solutions to the “problem” to searching for a colonial accommodation in bilateral relations with the great powers. Still, this task, too, was carried out in Hitler’s shadow, as Britain and France considered appeasing the German dictator in Africa. This chapter examines the role of colonial aspirations in Polish foreign policy as both an agenda and a diplomatic instrument deployed in response to geopolitical circumstances.

Searching for Multilateral Solutions in Geneva

In the mid-1930s the Polish government decided to experiment with multilateral solutions to the problems that allegedly constituted its Colonial Question, particularly by appealing to the League of Nations. As Drymmer and his associates drafted the Polish stance, the Brühl Palace tested the ground before proclaiming Poland’s interest in colonial matters in Geneva. In June 1936, Zarychta asked Bolesław Celiński, a Polish member of the League Secretariat’s Political Section, to tell his colleagues that Poland might put forward colonial demands in response to what it viewed

¹ Herbert von Dirksen, “The Ambassador in Great Britain to the Foreign Ministry,” October 31, 1938, 321–22, doc. 260, Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945 D/IV.

as the country's demographic-economic problem. Zarychta also suggested referencing the American researcher Warren S. Thompson, the author of demographic studies sympathetic to the Polish position, as well as Samuel Hoare's statements regarding raw materials.² Celiński reported the effects of his subsequent lobbying at the end of the summer. He informed Zarychta that another official from the Secretariat had claimed the legitimacy of the Polish theses. The official still dismissed them as impractical, however, suggesting that simply allowing Poland to participate in the free flow of people, goods, and capital could satisfy its demands while sparing it the costs of maintaining political colonies. In turn, Celiński had told the official that Warsaw "harbored no illusions" regarding the possibility of reintroducing a liberal world order.³ Told that Polish aspirations would find no support in London and sensing a large degree of British arrogance, Celiński suggested to Zarychta that it would not be Warsaw's radicalism, but precisely the fact that its demands did not threaten international peace, that encouraged the Western powers to ignore them. He also asked Zarychta to send him articles describing Tadeusz Brudziński's efforts in Liberia, which would supposedly demonstrate Polish colonial capacities to London.⁴

Hardly discouraged, the Brühl Palace analyzed potential times and settings for making its stance. In the first place, Warsaw planned to back projected Japanese requests for access to emigration outlets and sources of raw materials, expecting Tokyo to express them at the Twentieth Session of the International Labor Conference in June 1936. The ensuing Japanese restraint, however, stopped the Polish delegate, Stanisław Jurkiewicz, from fulfilling its superiors' wishes.⁵

² "Apoloniusz Zarychta to Boleśław Celiński," June 1936, 2/322/9583, MSZ, AAN. In an earlier book, Thompson suggested that countries with high rates of population growth such as Japan should "expand by the acquisition of more territory": Warren S. Thompson, *Danger Spots in World Population* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), 43.

³ "Boleśław Celiński to Apoloniusz Zarychta," August 19, 1936, 1, 92017/5, Władysław Wsznebór Kulski Papers, HI.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

⁵ Witold Langrod, "Sprawy emigracyjno-kolonizacyjne na Międzynarodowej Konferencji Pracy," June 19, 1936, 2/322/2183, MSZ, AAN.

Instead, Jurkiewicz limited himself to discussing the international community's need to facilitate the settlement of Polish emigrants in South America.⁶ Subsequently, in the following month, the Polish delegate in Geneva, Tytus Komarnicki (Figure 1), suggested to Drymmer that a regular session of the League's Assembly would be the most appropriate moment to present Warsaw's arguments independently. At the same time, Komarnicki issued final warnings against putting forward "too concrete" claims that would threaten states "endangered in their colonial possessions," against proposing any impractical theories, and against using "demagogy and phraseology." He also cautioned Drymmer against "making the League into a center of revisionism [that] contradicts the essential Polish interests in other aspects of foreign policy."⁷ Beck, himself present in Geneva for the Ninety-Third League Council Session, did, in fact, refrain from explicit calls for territorial acquisitions, which was in line with the conclusions previously reached at the Brühl Palace. Instead, the Polish statements addressed the composition of the Permanent Mandates Commission, Poland's purported demographic-economic troubles, and what they saw as the "Jewish Question."

During a confidential meeting of the Council on September 19, 1936, Beck participated in the discussion concerning the nomination of a new member of the Permanent Mandates Commission. While expressing his support for Lord Hailey's candidacy to replace Lord Lugard, the Polish foreign minister stated his hope that countries interested in the matters related to mandates would be able to send their own experts to the commission.⁸ After his return to Poland at the end of the month, in a telegram to Geneva, Beck acknowledged that Poland was alone in its

⁶ "Mowa Ministra Jurkiewicza," June 1936, 2/322/2183, MSZ, AAN.

⁷ "Tytus Komarnicki to Wiktor Drymmer," July 20, 1936, 2/322/2183, MSZ, AAN.

⁸ Wiktor Skiński, "Okólnik Wydziału Prasowego w sprawie emigracji z Polski," November 7, 1936, 659, doc. 338, PDD 1936; Józef Beck, "Oświadczenie w Radzie Ligi Narodów w sprawie stanowiska Polski wobec problemów populacyjno-surowcowych," September 19, 1936, 244, Przemówienia.

request, given Italy's and Germany's absence at the fall session, but told his delegation to proceed with other "colonial" claims anyway.⁹ Consequently, during a session of the Economic Commission of the League's Assembly on October 5, 1936, the Polish economic representative, Adam Rose, deplored the global shift away from the liberal order, which had allowed a free flow of goods and people, as tipping off the financial stability of many countries. He called the Council



Figure 1. Tytus Komarnicki. He the Polish delegate in Geneva charged with presenting Beck's colonial agenda. Source: Public Domain.

to respond to the "unfortunate" development with better ways of distributing raw materials. Mustering the claim of the "flawed socioeconomic structure" of Poland's Jewish population, Rose also asked for institutions such as the International Bureau of Labor to contrive practical means of arranging mass migration from "overpopulated countries" to "countries of population deficit."¹⁰ In turn, during a meeting of the Assembly on the following day, Komarnicki officially announced that Warsaw was interested in increasing Jewish emigration to Palestine. He repeated Rose's anti-

Semitic claims concerning the concentration of Polish Jews in certain professions and proclaimed that, since his country was home to the largest Jewish population in Europe, it was interested not only in the attempt to establish a Jewish "National Home" in Palestine but also in finding additional areas for Jewish settlement.¹¹ The Soviet delegation, in particular, attempted to underline the anti-Semitic character of this Polish campaign as resembling its Nazi German analogue, but, according

⁹ "Józef Beck to the Polish Legation to the League of Nations," September 30, 1936, 59037/2.2, Delegacja przy Lidze Narodów Telegrams, HILA.

¹⁰ Skiński, "Okólnik Wydziału Prasowego w sprawie emigracji z Polski," 659.

¹¹ Ibid., 659–60.

to Komarnicki, the Soviet move was also self-serving, as any international attempt to open Soviet borders to the influx of foreign people and ideas could topple the communist regime.¹²

The Polish persistence in stressing the connection between the Colonial Question and (mostly Jewish) emigration culminated in a symbolic success in Geneva. In mid-November, Komarnicki once again called for the return to the nineteenth-century world-order, reminding foreign dignitaries attending the session of the Migration Commission that national governments and railroad companies had once financed immigration. In an attempt to connect the issue to the Colonial Question, the Polish delegate argued that countries to which emigration had not traditionally taken place, for example colonies in Africa, should be taken into consideration as potential outlets.¹³ By the end of the Seventh Assembly Session, the Economic Commission passed a resolution praising the International Bureau of Labor for its efforts to facilitate and regulate migration and called the League to take part in these efforts.¹⁴ Moreover, concluding the session, the Assembly's newly elected president, Carlos Saavedra Lamas (Argentina), admitted that "the problem of emigration (...) is related to the colonial problem and to the problem of raw materials." "If we want to create a new international organization that reestablishes the equilibrium leading back to the lost stability," Lamas stated, "we must understand that we will not accomplish that without a new economic organization in which the demographic factor plays an essential role."¹⁵

Opposition to Demographic-Economic Arguments

Notwithstanding this symbolic success, the Brühl Palace soon shifted the center of its efforts away from the League, which it considered to be under British and French influence, toward

¹² Tytus Komarnicki, "Tajny telegram o dyskusji dotyczącej problemu populacyjno-emigracyjnego na XVII-em Zgromadzeniu Ligi Narodów," October 12, 1936, 6–7, 45015/68.11, Ambasada (United States), HILA.

¹³ "Tytus Komarnicki's statement at the Migration Commission," November 16, 1936, 2/322/2183, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁴ Skiwski, "Okólnik Wydziału Prasowego w sprawie emigracji z Polski," 660.

¹⁵ Ibid., 660–61.

particular unilateral actions and bilateral agreements. This was largely a consequence of a change in the critical domestic and external responses to the ways in which Poland's colonial agenda was presented in Geneva. In the fall of 1936, Western observers argued against the conflation of the Colonial Question, which they usually constructed as associated with the issue of raw materials, with the question of emigration, particularly with what the Poles identified as its "Jewish" dimension. While domestic commentators noted this conflicted economic-demographic character of Poland's Colonial Question, too, the British and the French also underlined it to argue that Beck's colonial agenda was inappropriate for discussion in the League of Nations in order to protect their own imperial interests.

The most important domestic challenges to Beck's colonial agenda, which usually came from moderate right-wingers with liberal economic views, addressed what the government viewed as its demographic-economic-Jewish character, opposing what they considered to be a conflation of different issues with one another. Although not particularly opposed to Jewish emigration, these right-wing intellectuals worried about government officials identifying ever larger numbers of the country's population as "redundant" and therefore destined for emigration. In the November 8, 1936 issue of the *IKC*, for example, one author denied that 9,000,000 "redundant" people lived in the Polish countryside. He cited Rajmund Buławski from the Central Statistical Office (*Główny Urząd Statystyczny*), according to whom that estimate stemmed from his misunderstanding of relative statistical data. The author did not deny that Poland was "overpopulated" but suggested that inflating these numbers fueled the international impression that it was hopelessly economically stagnated.¹⁶ He also quoted the former right-wing prime minister Władysław Grabski as saying that "neither new emigration projects, nor an agrarian reform, nor the call to

¹⁶ F. Z., "Fałszywa cyfra, która zaciężyla nad Polską...", *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, November 8, 1936, 1.

stop the population's natural growth" would prove effective in combatting "overpopulation."¹⁷ Instead, the Polish countryside required better educational, cultural, and agricultural techniques to meet Western standards, which, according to him, called for larger investments in agriculture from metropolitan areas.¹⁸



Figure 2. Jan Czekanowski, a promoter of a more economic approach to the Colonial Question. Source: NAC 1-N-107.

Another moderate right-winger, anthropologist Jan Czekanowski (1882–1965) (Figure 2), wished for the Brühl Palace to construct the Colonial Question in stricter economic terms. He suggested, echoing Orlicz-Dreszer, that Poland itself was turning into an “area of foreign colonial exploitation,” selling finished or half-finished products below the market value to import raw materials, which comprised two-thirds of all its imported goods.¹⁹ He argued that Poland required an “economic emancipation” from foreign loans and overpriced investments.²⁰

He compared emigration to slave trade, with shipping lines supplying cheap labor to the “colonies” where it was employed in Western factories.²¹ Playing with the multiple meanings of the word, the anthropologist pointed out that in 1929, for example, Poland had “exploited” its “colonies” of emigrants, with more than \$31,000,000 sent back in remittances, which was supposedly a sum larger than contemporary exports from the Belgian Congo or Cameroon.²² Instead of relying on emigrant remittances, Czekanowski suggested that Africa could supply Poland with raw materials

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1–2.

¹⁹ Jan Czekanowski, *Zagadnienia kolonialne a Polska* (Warsaw, 1937), 1.

²⁰ Ibid., 4.

²¹ Ibid., 5.

²² Ibid., 5–7.

while South America and Palestine could serve as emigration outlets for Christians and Jews, respectively, and that trading posts in both continents would eliminate the need for Western intermediaries.²³ Moreover, apparently unafraid of adopting the bloody Belgian monarch as his model, Czekanowski underlined that colonial expansion did not require a strong fleet but only an ambitious and clever foreign policy, referencing the non-military acts of the “old, perfidious king” Leopold II and Henry Morton Stanley.²⁴

The Western responses to Beck’s colonial agenda did not differ much from their domestic counterparts in content, since both took issue with its conflicted economic-demographic character and “Jewish” dimension. The British and the French, however, also wished to depict Poland’s Colonial Question as altogether inappropriate for discussion in the League of Nations in order to protect their geopolitical interests. For example, in the minutes of a meeting from September 29, 1936 concerning one of the British ambassador Howard Kennard’s telegrams to Anthony Eden, the British under-secretary for foreign affairs, Robert Vansittart, wrote: “The Polish claim to colonies is abracadabrante [sic] but it is as good as the German, which I myself favour – eventually. But the only, & very unjust & very real & quite sensible, reason why we prefer the German to the Polish claim is that the Germans are stronger.”²⁵ Vansittart’s informal comment reflected the

²³ Ibid., 7–8. In his anti-German but nevertheless pseudo-scientific anthropological treatise from 1934, Czekanowski claimed that Poland’s Jewish populations featured a significant concentration of the “Nordic element.” According to him, it was these “Nordic” Jews that expressed support for Zionism most strongly, while their more “Laponoid” counterparts preferred agricultural emigration to Latin America. Czekanowski, otherwise a supporter of Poland’s commercial aspirations and a fan of Dmowski, opposed the idea that Africa could serve as an emigration outlet for a “Nordic,” and therefore Zionist, Jewish population. See Jan Czekanowski, *Człowiek w czasie i przestrzeni* (Warsaw: Trzaska, Evert & Michalski S.A., 1934), 196–203.

²⁴ Czekanowski, *Zagadnienia kolonialne a Polska*, 11.

²⁵ Quoted in *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939*, vol. XVII, Series 2 (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1979), 442.

ultimate British disinterest in the inconsistencies in Warsaw's demographic-economic reasoning and instead suggested the possibility of colonial concessions to the strongest bidder.

In contrast to internal Whitehall minutes, Kennard's telegrams to Whitehall contained remarks both confirming the alleged existence of the Polish demographic-economic problem and disparaging Warsaw for its naïveté in thinking that it could be solved colonially. In mid-October 1936, for example, the British ambassador pointed out to Eden:

"It is certainly true that some districts are overpopulated. While travelling by car from Warsaw to Lemberg [Lwów] last week I was impressed by the density of population which was apparent in the districts through which I passed. It may be said that there are, more especially on the eastern marches, large tracts of marshland which could be reclaimed and colonised, but it should not be forgotten that the Pripet marshes are a useful form of military defence against Russian aggression, and that, as the greater part of them lie in Russian territory, it would require Bolshevik cooperation. (...) It is difficult, however, to imagine that the Poles can be so naïve as to think that, even if some colonial Power were prepared to accede to their desire in this respect, they could find the financial resources requisite to exploit and administer any such territories."²⁶

In this manner, Kennard defended Warsaw's contentious demographic argument for emigration outlets but considered the proposed colonial solution as impractical and naïve. He asked his French counterpart Noël whether Beck believed that Britain or France would "bring him on a plate one of our colonies, alongside the capital necessary to exploit it."²⁷ Likewise, two months later, the British ambassador accepted the Polish position that "Poland is experiencing an expansion of her

²⁶ "Howard William Kennard to Anthony Eden," October 14, 1936, 101, FO 417/36, Confidential Print Poland, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

²⁷ "M. Léon Noël, Ambassadeur de France à Varsovie, à M. Delbos, Ministre des Affaires étrangères," October 14, 1936, 522, doc. 348, DDF 1932-1939 2/III.

population which, though in itself not different from that which other countries have experienced, is occurring at a time when the expedients whereby other countries dealt with a similar expansion are no longer available.”²⁸ Kennard supported Polish elites in the problematic argument that “the pressure of population explains Polish anti-Semitism; it accounts in part for Poland’s shortage of capital; it is the reason for the Government’s drive for industrialization; it explains the policy of agrarian reform; it explains the agricultural discontent.”²⁹ Furthermore, the ambassador once again dismissed the projects of draining the Polesie marshlands, this time as astronomically expensive and potentially allowing a settlement of 300,000 only, which accounted for the number of people usually born over a period of nine months.³⁰ He confessed that, “if an increase in population is a valid argument for the possession of colonies, Poland has certainly a much stronger case than Germany, since the increase of the population is both relatively and actually larger than that of Germany.”³¹

In his messages to Whitehall, Kennard likewise recognized the dearth of capital that affected Poland’s ability to purchase colonial raw materials and, consequently, its industrial development. He did not believe, however, that Poland’s colonial expansion was the right solution to this particular “problem.” In December 1936, Kennard illustrated Poland’s economic situation with the example of the printing industry importing paper despite the country’s large exports of wood.³² He identified Poland’s strict control of the hard currency flow out of the country, however, rather than high prices of raw materials, as a factor inhibiting the payment of Poland’s foreign

²⁸ “Report on Poland,” 1937, I.3, FO 371/20760/C8603, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, I.6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, I.10-I.11.

³² *Ibid.*, I.7-I.8.

obligations. This, in turn, allegedly discouraged foreign investment from financing the country's industrial development.³³ Kennard argued, moreover, that Warsaw's reluctance to devalue the złoty, which it maintained at the gold standard precisely to finance foreign loans, lowered exports and hit wages and salaries, thus slowing down the economy.³⁴ In this manner, the ambassador discerned a sort of "vicious circle" in Poland's economic life but proposed deregulation, not colonial expansion, as a solution to increase the amount of (foreign) capital available for further industrial development. It seemed that British critiques of what Polish leaders constructed as the Colonial Question reflected London's interest in having its credits repaid by Warsaw and in acquiring a further stake in the Polish industrial sector.

Kennard's negative evaluation of the country's ambitions was perfectly in line with London's official position expressed in the 1937 publication of the Royal Institute of International Affairs titled *The Colonial Problem*, which undermined Poland's demographic and economic arguments for revising the colonial status quo. Regarding the possibility of European emigration to Africa, the opinion of the British institute could be outlined as follows: the number of economic opportunities for Europeans in Africa was limited, Europe was not the only overpopulated continent, the Chinese and south Indians often acclimated better to the African climate.³⁵ London believed that Africa's capacity to absorb more colonists existed but was exaggerated: supposedly, most good farming land, for example in Kenya, had already been taken, and there was "land hunger" among the "natives," too.³⁶ In this context, Warsaw's position was assessed succinctly in

³³ "Howard William Kennard to Anthony Eden," December 1, 1936, 130, FO 417/36, Confidential Print Poland, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.). In fact, the German remilitarization of the Rhineland encouraged the Polish treasury to accumulate hard currency: "Jan Szembek to the Embassy in Paris," April 28, 1936, 45004/18.1, Ambasada (France), HILA.

³⁴ "Report on Poland," I.16-I.19.

³⁵ Royal Institute of International Affairs, *The Colonial Problem* (Cambridge University Press, 1937), 345–48.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 362.

one sentence: “Poland cries out for opportunities of settlement, but her needs cannot be met in colonial areas.”³⁷ Regarding more commercial matters, which incorporated the issue of raw materials, the British admitted to having certain privileges, also in open-door mandates, but dismissed the problem, showing, for example, that German exports into its former colonies remained extremely high, and suggested that not having to maintain the mandates financially was a benefit in and of itself.³⁸

In 1938, a similar study titled *Europe et la question coloniale* was published in France, in which the author, Gilbert Maroger, paid particular attention to the Polish ambitions and, like his British counterparts, noticed their conflicted economic-demographic character. He argued that all of Europe was experiencing the emergence of a “new imperialism” that reversed the old paradigm: whereas old imperialism used to be the domain of industrialized nations, its new iteration was now imagined as serving agricultural nations in the process of industrial development.³⁹ Furthermore, the other distinctive feature of “new imperialism” was its relation to the mandate system and Wilsonian rhetoric.⁴⁰ In Poland, the “new imperialism” supposedly manifested itself in the LMiK’s call for a “moral” formation of the youth and in the attempts to achieve internal unity around demographic and economic issues.⁴¹ Maroger placed Warsaw’s “colonial” aspirations in quotation marks, given their diverse aims related to emigration and raw materials, and described Beck’s colonial agenda in Geneva as a means of marketing them to a foreign audience.⁴² He admitted that emigration served Poland not only in reducing unemployment but also as a source of revenue in

³⁷ Ibid., 65.

³⁸ Ibid., 70–73.

³⁹ Gilbert Maroger, *L’Europe et la question coloniale: Revendications coloniales allemandes, aspirations coloniales polonaises* (Librairie du reueil Sirey, 1938), 3–8.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 10–18.

⁴¹ Ibid., 9, 259–63.

⁴² Ibid., 249–51.

emigrant remittances, and that Britain's introduction of imperial tariffs after the Ottawa Conference limited Poland's capital reserves.⁴³ The argument continued that abroad, however, Warsaw's expression of colonial aspirations in "international confines" (*enceintes internationales*) was too ambivalent and ineffective, coinciding with Berlin's but lacking the latter's "precision."⁴⁴

Maroger's views corresponded to the official position of the Quai d'Orsay, which initially refused to give Warsaw any satisfaction: its relations with Warsaw had been sour due to the Polish-German Non-Aggression Pact from January 1934 and Beck's opposition to France's alliance with the Soviet Union. In his report for Pierre Laval from April 1935, concerning the "psychological" and "personal" factors in Polish politics, the French ambassador Jules Laroche observed that, while neither Francophiles nor Francophobes, Piłsudski's supporters did not wish their country to turn into France's satellite.⁴⁵ It was, in fact, in terms of diplomatic relations that Western, and especially French, diplomats first interpreted the Polish statements in Geneva. In a September 1936 message to Yvon Delbos, the French minister during the Popular Front and Laroche's successor, Léon Noël, suggested that Beck's request that Poland be invited to join the Permanent Mandates Commission was "characteristic" of his policy of "independence" from Western powers and was intended to lead Poland to colonial acquisitions in Hitler and Mussolini's shadow.⁴⁶ Whitehall harbored similar suspicions. In November 1936, Beck assured Eden in London that his colonial agenda did not have any political or prestige motives but simply aimed to address what Warsaw viewed as its demographic-economic problem.⁴⁷ In January 1937, while inquiring about settlement possibilities

⁴³ Ibid., 256–57.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 414.

⁴⁵ "Jules Laroche to Pierre Laval," April 16, 1935, 200PAAP/1 (Léon Noël), Papiers d'Agents, ADP.

⁴⁶ "M. Léon Noël, Ambassadeur de France à Varsovie, à M. Delbos, Ministre des Affaires étrangères," September 22, 1936, 395, doc. 273, DDF 1932-1939 2/III.

⁴⁷ "Niepodpisana notatka o problemie emigracji w rozmowie ministrów spraw zagranicznych Polski i Wielkiej Brytanii," November 10, 1936, 674, doc. 344, PDD 1936.

in British colonies, Zygmunt Merdinger reassured British diplomats that Poland was not looking to practice imperialism or to pursue political colonies.⁴⁸ At the same time, the Brühl Palace requested that Roman Dyboski, a “renowned scholar of the English language and politics,” give a lecture at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London to placate the British scholastic opinion.⁴⁹ The talk, which took place at the end of May and attracted a “quite numerous and serious audience,” resulted in a publication in *International Affairs*, in which Dyboski underlined Poland’s alleged multilateral and non-revisionist approach to a problem identified as broad in nature.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, the Quai d’Orsay worried that, through colonial aspirations, the Brühl Palace was inaugurating a rapprochement with Wilhelmstrasse (Germany) and stirring nationalist sentiments at home. In September 1936, the French chargé des affaires in Berlin, Pierre Arnal, sent Delbos a press report outlining reactions to Beck’s colonial stance, wondering “whether the pretensions of the Polish government parallel to those of the Reich’s government will create links of solidarity or, in contrast, will put them in competition [with each other].”⁵¹ Arnal suggested that pursuing colonial designs, whether in partnership with Germany or not, would require that Poland “ensure all tranquility along its western frontier.”⁵² At the same time, however, the LMİK’s anti-German disposition and naval competition in the Baltic would continue to sow discord between the two countries.⁵³ Noël was likewise worried that Beck was, intentionally or unwittingly, drawing Warsaw closer to Berlin’s orbit, also through appeals to nationalism and anti-Semitism. He wrote

⁴⁸ “Gladwyn Jebb on conversation with Zygmunt Merdinger,” January 29, 1937, FO 371/20763/C896, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

⁴⁹ “Wiktor Drymmer to Edward Raczyński,” January 13, 1937, 2/503/893, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

⁵⁰ “Edward Raczyński to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” June 2, 1937, 2/503/893, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN; Roman Dyboski, “Economic and Social Problems of Poland,” *International Affairs* 16, no. 4 (1937): 579–600.

⁵¹ “M. Arnal, Chargé des Affaires de France à Berlin, à M. Delbos, Ministre des Affaires étrangères,” September 24, 1936, 414, doc. 285, DDF 1932-1939 2/III.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 416.

on September 30, 1936 that “Beck has the great quality of identifying and exploiting the themes that please his compatriots” and that his embrace of the “sentiments that slept in the heart of the nation of emigrants” earned him the approval of all, including his enemies.⁵⁴ In the ambassador’s opinion, Poland wished for two colonies: “one for storing its Jews, the other one for its proper children.”⁵⁵ Still, Noël also judged that Poland’s ambitions stemmed not only from anti-Jewish sentiment but also from the “instinctual attraction of humid and cold countries toward warm countries” and from the confusion of “general ideas” with “imprecise dreams” typical in Slavic countries.⁵⁶ He referred to this alleged “Slavic” nature of the Polish aspirations again in a letter from November 10, mocking Warsaw for believing that “aiming for a precise goal and pursuing it with perseverance” would “like in fairy tales, make most extraordinary things happen.”⁵⁷ In this manner, anti-Slavic remarks accompanied Noël’s critique of the Polish agenda’s eclecticism.

By the end of 1936, the most influential Western powers in Geneva, Britain and France, formed negative attitudes toward Beck’s colonial agenda, which they perceived as encompassing too many different issues that should be dealt with individually and as inadvertently bringing Poland closer to the revisionist powers: discursively, in nationalist spirit, if not in terms of foreign policy. Britain and France’s inclination to protect their imperial interests was clear, of course, and distinguished them from the United States, whose response was more impartial. In October 1936, Orsen N. Nielsen, chargé d’affaires ad interim in Warsaw, suggested to Cordell Hull that Poland’s colonial aspirations occurred likely without consultation with Germany. Instead, Warsaw was “striking while (it believes) the opportunity presents itself to drive a bargain of some kind with

⁵⁴ “M. Léon Noël, Ambassadeur de France à Varsovie, à M. Delbos, Ministre des Affaires étrangères,” September 30, 1936, 449–50, doc. 304, DDF 1932-1939 2/III.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 450.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 450–51.

⁵⁷ “Léon Noël to Yvon Delbos,” November 10, 1936, 2, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

other Powers.”⁵⁸ Moreover, according to Nielsen, Poland’s joining Britain, France, and the United States in an effort to stabilize currencies might be used as a bargaining tool by Warsaw to obtain a loan from any of these states to finance Polish emigration.⁵⁹ By 1939, Raymond Leslie Buell, an American political scientist, would argue that what he described as a justified Polish desire for greater financial means of sponsoring emigration and purchasing raw materials could come from a “world recovery along traditional lines” but pointed out that “there is no prospect that this kind of world will again come into existence,” which had, according to him, consequently contributed to the popularity of the LMiK.⁶⁰ He also signaled that Poland would likely lack the capital for necessary colonial investments and “has far more to gain from the development of plans for assisted migration and for placing colonial empires under international control than from any reallocation of colonies.”⁶¹

The Collapse of Multilateralism

Notwithstanding some understanding from Washington, the opposition to the Polish demands from the powers with most influence in Geneva, Britain and France, led to the collapse of the Brühl Palace’s attempts at multilateralism. In the first place, Beck’s request that Poland be invited to join the Permanent Mandates Commission was declined. In March 1937, the Quai d’Orsay communicated to Franciszek Frankowski, an official at the Polish embassy in Paris, that France would not block Poland’s wish. Nevertheless, an internal French note stated that “the affair was one of principle, as satisfaction given to Poland risked entertaining new demands that might not seem less justified, but acquiescing to which would be difficult without disturbing the

⁵⁸ “Orsen N. Nielsen to Cordell Hull,” October 10, 1936, 6, RG 59 860C.014, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 6–7.

⁶⁰ Raymond Leslie Buell, *Poland. Key to Europe* (New York: Knopf, 1939), 230–31.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 234–35.

equilibrium of the Commission.”⁶² In fact, the governments of Latvia, Greece, and Iraq had demanded the participation of their observers in the proceedings, complicating the reception of the Polish request.⁶³ Delbos confirmed his ministry’s view in a message to the French ambassador in London, Charles Corbin, adding that Poland’s candidacy would open Pandora’s box, since it was a country that possessed “neither colonies nor colonial traditions.”⁶⁴ Furthermore, in a message from June 1, 1937 Noël suggested that Beck would not be able to find a competent expert for the Commission.⁶⁵ In effect, Warsaw’s candidacy had been rejected on July 1.⁶⁶ In response to the impending failure, during a meeting with the British representative Frank Walters in Geneva, his Polish counterpart Kazimierz Trębicki stated that using formalities to prevent “the country with the highest concentration of Jews in Europe from participating in the Commission was most unfortunate.”⁶⁷

While dashing Beck’s hopes regarding the Permanent Mandates Commission, the British also opposed other Polish initiatives in Geneva aiming to advance Poland’s influence in the colonial world. By the end of January 1937, mostly in response to German and Italian colonial territorial claims, the Council had appointed a special “Committee for the Study of the Problem of Raw Materials.”⁶⁸ After the committee’s first session in March, the British representative Frederick Leith-Ross reacted with anger to Adam Rose’s remarks that raw materials should be subject to some form of countertrade and that Polish firms should be allowed to exploit certain colonial areas.

⁶² “Note pour Monsieur Massigli,” March 26, 1937, 242QO/554, Service français de la Société des Nations, ADP.

⁶³ Kazimierz Trębicki, “Polish Legation to the League of Nations to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” August 4, 1937, 45013/16.6, Ambasada (Great Britain), HILA.

⁶⁴ “Yvon Delbos to Charles Corbin,” April 16, 1937, 242QO/554, Service français de la Société des Nations, ADP.

⁶⁵ “Léon Noël to René Massigli,” June 1, 1937, 242QO/554, Service français de la Société des Nations, ADP.

⁶⁶ “Telegram from Kazimierz Trębicki to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” July 1, 1937, 45013/18.2, Ambasada (Great Britain), HILA.

⁶⁷ Trębicki, “Polish Legation to the League of Nations to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.”

⁶⁸ Andrew J. Crozier, *Appeasement and Germany’s Last Bid For Colonies* (Springer, 1988), 211–12.

Leith-Ross repeated Kennard's argument that Poland's difficulties to pay for raw materials stemmed from its hard currency restrictions and threatened Rose that London would retaliate by reconsidering the interest rates of British loans and introducing clearing measures.⁶⁹ Leith-Ross's constant references to bilateral Polish-British relations undermined Rose's efforts to propose multilateral solutions in the committee.⁷⁰ Komarnicki communicated to the Brühl Palace that, as a result of joint opposition from the exporters of raw materials including Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States, many of the Polish propositions made it to the committee's report in a watered-down form.⁷¹ Thus, for the first time, the Polish agenda seemed to suffer from its association with German revisionist claims.⁷² In a telling remark, also made in March 1937, Noël pointed out to Delbos that Warsaw had not explained in what ways giving it access to colonies in Africa would ensure that the Western empires' political sovereignty remained intact.⁷³ Like the struggle for a seat on the Permanent Mandates Commission, another Polish attempt to find a multilateral solution in Geneva was failing as the fear of Germany made the West highly suspicious of anything that touched the status quo.

In fairness, Poland contributed to the perception that it was friendly toward revisionism. By the end of January 1937, the Brühl Palace *de facto* recognized Italy's rule over Ethiopia, extending the accreditation of its embassy in Rome to Addis-Ababa.⁷⁴ In June 1937, Komarnicki argued that Ethiopia was an elephant in the room during the May session of the League's

⁶⁹ Tytus Komarnicki, "Depesza szyfrowa Nr. 6," March 10, 1937, 49, Diariusz III.

⁷⁰ Tytus Komarnicki, "Depesza szyfrowa Nr. 8," March 11, 1937, 50–51, Diariusz III.

⁷¹ Tytus Komarnicki, "Depesza szyfrowa Nr. 9," March 13, 1937, 51–52, Diariusz III.

⁷² Crozier, *Appeasement and Germany's Last Bid For Colonies*, 213.

⁷³ "Léon Noël to Yvon Delbos," March 10, 1937, 106CPCOM/421, Série Z-Europe (Pologne), Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

⁷⁴ Tadeusz Gwiazdoski, "Pismo naczelnika Wydziału Organizacji Międzynarodowych na temat uznania aneksji Etiopii," January 4, 1937, 4, doc. 2, PDD 1937; Józef Beck, "Telegram szyfrowy ministra spraw zagranicznych do ambasadora w Rzymie na temat uznania aneksji Etiopii," January 8, 1937, 16, doc. 7, PDD 1937.

Assembly. According to him, there was a general will to determine the factual non-existence of an Ethiopian government in order to pull Italy away from the Reich.⁷⁵ Since neither Britain nor France was eager to arrange a collective declaration to that respect, however, Komarnicki issued a unilateral statement at Beck's behest, saying that his government, "not having any direct or indirect interest in that region of the world and [being] preoccupied exclusively with the future of international collaboration in the framework of the League of Nations that needs to base its existence on realities, considers this question resolved, at least for itself."⁷⁶ Warsaw's "solution" of the Ethiopian "question" satisfied Rome but also elicited Western suspicions about a potential Polish-Italian agreement. In reaction, Beck asked his embassies in the West to issue a *démenti* and to state that Italy's orientation toward the Mediterranean Sea and Africa only created a distance between the two countries.⁷⁷

Indeed, notwithstanding the internationalist terms that it employed as a precaution, the Brühl Palace was aware that its colonial agenda was suffering from association with revisionism. In August 1937, the ministry's internal information bulletin, *Polska a Zagranica*, published an article whose first, public half recalled the colonial milieu's older positioning of Poland as a junior partner of Western empires. This time, however, this argument was expressed in stronger terms and coupled with a mild critique of the West. "In the great unexploited area of the Anglo-Saxon countries and colonial empires," the bulletin argued, "one can observe strong decreases in population growth and disappearance of emigration tendencies." It was suggested that, in contrast to landless Polish peasants, unemployed Westerners "prefer to live off public welfare in great cities

⁷⁵ Tytus Komarnicki, "Raport delegata przy Lidze Narodów: polska deklaracja w sprawie Etiopii na sesji Zgromadzenia Ligi Narodów (z załącznikiem)," June 1, 1937, 354–61, doc. 133, PDD 1937.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 361.

⁷⁷ Józef Beck, "Okólnik ministra spraw zagranicznych: polska deklaracja w sprawie Etiopii na sesji Zgromadzenia Ligi Narodów," May 28, 1937, 341–42, doc. 127, PDD 1937.

rather than become independent pioneers in the still uncivilized areas.” In this way, Warsaw courted the “white races” of the West, threatened by the “population pressure of the fast-multiplying yellow race (China, Japan) and the black one in Africa,” to take advantage of the unemployed and eager “element” from the “overpopulated countries of central and eastern Europe.”⁷⁸ It was repeated, moreover, that demographic and economic reasons, not an imperialist agenda, propelled Poland to find internationalist solutions to balance its payrolls.⁷⁹ In the latter, confidential half of the article reserved for the ministry, this thesis was not retracted, but it was revealed that Poland’s colonial arrangements in Africa would be ultimately unilateral, rather than internationalist, with economic concessions for plantations and mines eventually leading to the Polish currency introduced in concession areas.⁸⁰ At the same time, however, the claim that Poland’s colonial claims moved the country to the “camp of powers with imperialist ambitions” was rejected as “anti-Polish propaganda,” since the much more developed Germany and Japan allegedly did not need colonies as population outlets but only for prestige.⁸¹

Warsaw’s efforts to redefine the terms of trade in raw materials soon faltered due to their association with the revisionist powers’ autarchic policies of self-sufficiency by the Western powers. Before the third session of the raw materials committee in September 1937, Beck issued an instruction to Rose and other delegates, asking them to negotiate with the French for appointing a Pole as the committee’s *rapporteur* and to communicate that Warsaw did not assume an ideological stance regarding autarchy but believed that the entire world could not be ruled

⁷⁸ “Przegląd informacyjny ‘Polska a Zagranica’ (fragment): problemy demograficzne i surowcowe Polski,” August 21, 1937, 547, doc. 212, PDD 1937.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 550.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 552.

⁸¹ Ibid., 552–53.

according to Western economic rules.⁸² Moreover, Beck alleged once again that the purpose of Poland's colonial claims was to place the country in a position of strength for negotiating the matters of emigration and raw materials: "Since the troubled world is currently afraid of dynamic states and willingly settles with them to prevent any brawl (*awantura*), let us underline the factors that testify and create the appearance that we are dynamic."⁸³ Beck was treading a fine line, however, since Poland's "dynamism" could be easily mistaken for a wish to destroy the colonial status quo altogether, given his cooperation with the Japanese delegation during the committee's second session in March.⁸⁴ In fact, the ongoing Japanese invasion of China had turned sentiments in Geneva against any acts that would appear as appeasing the Axis. Instead of tackling the issues of hard currency and imperial structures, the final report of the committee underlined that it was allegedly the shipping cost of colonial raw materials occurring in Africa, especially minerals, that made them prohibitively expensive in eastern Europe.⁸⁵

The report triggered the Polish delegation in Geneva to let their frustration loose. On September 27, 1937, during the Eighteenth Session of the Assembly, Adam Rose disparaged the old faith in "laissez-fairism," which the Polish representative perceived as leading to "absurd" conclusions such as the belief that agricultural states should remain agricultural and simply purchase finished products at market prices from their more industrially developed partners. He suggested that "retarded" rural countries like Poland could only turn into equal trade partners if the international community addressed their structural demographic-economic problems.⁸⁶ Rose

⁸² Józef Beck, "Instrukcja ministra spraw zagranicznych dla delegacji polskiej na Zgromadzenie Ligi Narodów," September 1937, 605, doc. 231, PDD 1937.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ "Notatka z rozmowy dyr. T.Gwiazdoskiego z posłem japońskim p. Ito," March 18, 1937, 65010/12.1, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

⁸⁵ *Report of the Committee for the Study of the Problem of Raw Materials* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1937).

⁸⁶ "Discours prononcé à la Deuxième Commission de la 18ème Assemblée de la Société des Nations par M. Adam Rose, Délégué de la Pologne," September 27, 1937, 1-2, 2/322/9590, MSZ, AAN.

blamed the inability of the international system to keep the promise to allow “states to buy what they want, the debtors to pay their debts, and the tourists to travel where they wish” for autarchic tendencies.⁸⁷ He critiqued the Tripartite Agreement of 1936 between the United States, Britain, and France to maintain existing currency exchange rates as ineffective in stimulating world trade and as failing to secure a stable international monetary foundation. Instead, he argued that a concerted international effort to regulate and finance migration, to facilitate the flow of capital, and to guarantee free access to raw materials would be needed for the purpose.⁸⁸ In turn, at the meeting that took place on January 28, 1938 during the Hundredth Session of the Council, Tytus Komarnicki, serving as *rapporteur* in this case, described the results of the report as unsatisfactory. He decried what he viewed as an artificial separation of the issue from the Colonial Question, which, according to him, underestimated the availability of raw materials in the colonies.⁸⁹ Finally, in its official reply sent to the Economic Commission, the Polish government posited that a more general application of open-door policies would not solve the problem of free access, which stemmed from legal and fiscal obstacles rather than purely economic ones.⁹⁰

A Shift Toward Bilateralism

This was essentially the end of Beck’s attempts to propose multilateral “colonial” solutions to what his cabinet constructed as Poland’s demographic-economic problem in Geneva. Instead, for the first time, Warsaw decided to accentuate its interest in the Colonial Question in bilateral relations with another state in December 1937, taking advantage of overtures from Paris. Back in

⁸⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 3–4.

⁸⁹ “Centième Session du Conseil. Procès-verbal. Troisième séance” (Société des Nations, January 28, 1938), 10–11, 2/322/9590, MSZ, AAN.

⁹⁰ “Odpowiedź Rządu Polskiego na notę Sekretariatu Ligi Narodów Nr.C.L.32.1938.II.B. w związku z raportem Komitetu Ekonomicznego Ligi Narodów C.577.411.1937.II.B. dotyczącym surowców,” 1938, 5, 2/322/9590, MSZ, AAN.

March 1936, after Hitler's remilitarization of the Rhineland, Beck had offered Poland's assistance to France but irritated his counterpart in Paris, Pierre-Étienne Flandin, with a reassurance to Berlin once the French rejected his offer.⁹¹ After coming to power in June 1936, however, the French government of the left-wing Popular Front changed its foreign policy toward Poland. In the second half of 1936, the two countries ratified the Rambouillet Accords, thanks to which Poland received French loans to finance its purchases of French military equipment. By December, the French foreign minister Yvon Delbos decided to see Beck in Warsaw in a final attempt to broker differences that existed between France's eastern allies.⁹²

Sensing his partner's good will in mending Polish-French relations, Beck took the opportunity to raise the Colonial Question with Delbos during their train ride from Warsaw to



Figure 3. Delbos (middle) in Warsaw with Beck (left) and Noël. Source: NAC 1-D-683-4.

Kraków on December 6, 1937.

(Figure 3) He told his French counterpart that Poland was not pursuing “political or spectacular aims” but was only posing the Colonial Question in terms of emigration and economics.

Delbos found this approach “legitimate” but argued that

Beck's singling out of Jews for emigration would be “inopportune.” In turn, the Polish minister

⁹¹ Henryk Batowski, *Między dwiema wojnami 1919-1939 : zarys historii dyplomatycznej* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001).

⁹² John E Dreifort, *Yvon Delbos at the Quai d'Orsay: French Foreign Policy during the Popular Front 1936-1938*. (Lawrence, 1973), 125–41.

“recognized the justice of the observation” as far as it concerned territories other than Palestine.⁹³ Delbos then noted a change in the nature of Germany’s claims, which shifted away from Schacht’s economic arguments toward political claims, and warned Poland against imitating its neighbor in this respect.⁹⁴ The French public reacted to the news of Beck broaching the topic in a manner similar to Delbos’s.⁹⁵ The popular *Le Petit Parisien*, for example, deemed Poland’s colonial aspirations acceptable except for their inadvertent effect of supporting German claims.⁹⁶ Likewise, the communist *La Voix du Peuple* called Beck a “Hitlerian” and considered the Polish aspirations in the same category as their German counterparts.⁹⁷ In contrast, the right-wing Catholic *Le Pays-Réal* asked whether “the Negroes of Cameroon will learn Polish” and answered that “if you admit that Germany must possess an outlet in Africa or elsewhere, you must accept that the Poles demand the same right.”⁹⁸

Back in Geneva, similar accusations of revisionism and nationalism continued to torpedo Warsaw’s efforts to persuade the international community to address its demands in demographic terms. In 1938, the Polish delegation lobbied for the establishment of a “Permanent Committee for Demographic Affairs,” which allegedly enjoyed the League’s support.⁹⁹ In the second half of June 1938, however, the director of the Economic Section Pierre Stoppani and his assistant Maurice Baumont traveled to Poland to investigate some of the country’s economic troubles but expressed negative attitudes toward the Polish claims, especially toward what Poles pitched as the “Jewish”

⁹³ Yvon Delbos, “Notes du Ministre. III. Dernier entretien avec M. Beck,” December 6, 1937, 618, doc. 319, DDF 1932-1939 2/VII.

⁹⁴ “Rozmowa P. Ministra Becka z P. Ministrem Delbosem w pociągu między Warszawą i Krakowem,” December 6, 1937, 3, 2/322/3771, MSZ, AAN.

⁹⁵ “Prasa o pobycie Min. Delbosa w Polsce,” December 1937, 17–20, 2/322/3771, MSZ, AAN.

⁹⁶ Lucien Bourguès, “Le voyage de M. Delbos,” *Le Petit Parisien*, December 8, 1937, 3.

⁹⁷ P., “M. Delbos à Varsovie,” *La Voix du Peuple*, December 6, 1937.

⁹⁸ Serge Doring, “Les nègres du Cameroun, apprendront-ils le polonais?,” *Le Pays-Réal*, December 12, 1937.

⁹⁹ Zbigniew Jakubski, “Sprawozdanie z pobytu w Polsce pp. Pierre Stoppani, dyrektora Sekcji Ekonomicznej Ligi Narodów oraz dr. Maurice Baumont, członka tejże Sekcji,” July 6, 1938, 21, 2/322/9595, MSZ, AAN.

dimension of the country's supposed demographic-economic problem. During a conversation with Jan Dębski of the LMiK, Stoppani limited his advice to the observation that Poland would need a more constructive dialogue with Geneva. At the same time, the diplomat admitted – outside of the protocol – that a solution to the Colonial Question would require Poland to iron out a moderate stance with Germany and Italy, all the while reproaching Warsaw for allegedly taking a revisionist stance alongside Berlin.¹⁰⁰ According to Zbigniew Jakubski, the head of the Settlement Section of the Emigration Division, Stoppani and Baumont travelled to Poland with their opinions fully shaped, convinced that demographic questions should be dealt with at the national level, and “all our talks and our efforts at ‘persuading’ him do not matter much for the matter.”¹⁰¹ Once again, the Polish initiative yielded no practical results, partly because the Polish agenda functioned in an environment in which concerns about German and Italian revisionism took primacy.

Less significant attempts at multilateralism continued to occur into 1939. Referencing Jan Smuts, the Polish Federation of Associations for the League of Nations (*Fédération Polonaise des Associations pour la Société des Nations*), for example, issued a memorandum arguing for the extension of the mandate system to all colonial territories and for the constitution of a Supreme Council for all member-states interested in the matters of migration and raw materials.¹⁰² Similar ideas, although not necessarily put in the conceptual framework of the League, continued to emerge in the colonial milieu. Writing under the LMiK's auspices, one Mieczysław Dorywalski proposed the creation of a geopolitical entity called “Eurafrica,” in which the tropical parts of Africa would serve as Europe's reservoir of raw materials as long as the colonial empires overcame

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 10–13.

¹⁰¹ Zbigniew Jakubski, “Notatka,” June 23, 1938, 10, 2/322/9595, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁰² “Memorandum sur la question de l'extension des principes des mandats aux territoires coloniaux” (Fédération Polonaise des Associations pour la S.d.N, 1939), 2/322/9590, MSZ, AAN.

what he described as their particular interests.¹⁰³ Likewise, the Catholic Church was also a proponent of international solutions to its own construct of the Colonial Question. Ludwik Górski, a professor at the Catholic University of Lublin, argued for a redistribution of colonies to “overpopulated” countries such as Poland in the name of Christian justice. He suggested that only international cooperation would allow for appropriate population transfers around the globe and would, in effect, contain the implementation of anti-Catholic and “neo-Malthusian” solutions adopted to limit human reproduction.¹⁰⁴ Reinterpreting one of Pius XI’s social encyclicals, in which the Pope argued that material goods of the world should serve the entire humanity, Górski pointed out that a “state would disturb this [divine] system if it directed its national economy to its own benefit only, disregarding the higher good of all.”¹⁰⁵

The Government Takes Over the LMiK

Internationalism ceased to matter in the fall of 1938, as the League’s most influential members, Britain and France, ultimately erased any semblance of multilateral approaches with their appeasement of Nazi Germany at the expense of another member-state, Czechoslovakia. In consequence, Beck’s colonial agenda gradually shifted from proposing multilateral “solutions” to using colonial propaganda to accomplish domestic unity and affect bilateral relations with European enemies and allies. This shift from multilateralism to bilateralism meant that the Brühl Palace would no longer need to shroud its colonial propaganda in internationalist terms. In fact, underlining the explicit “colonial” and “great-power” character of the Polish demands was sometimes deemed preferable in the bilateral approach. In any case, however, it first became necessary for the Polish government to control the nature of the LMiK’s discourse disseminated

¹⁰³ Mieczysław Dorywalski, *Afryka tropikalna jako źródło surowcowe* (Poznań: Liga Morska i Kolonialna, 1939), 2–7.

¹⁰⁴ Ludwik Górski, *Problem kolonialny a współczesna myśl katolicka* (Lublin, 1939), 32–33.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

in the country in order to gear it toward concrete domestic and geopolitical aims. Fortunately for Beck, however, the opportunity to bend the LMiK to his will had presented itself to him already in 1936.

POLSKA MUSI MIEĆ KOLONIE



Figure 4. An LMiK diploma given to the foreign ministry in recognition of its colonial efforts and the close links between the two entities. Source:

In June 1936 the death of Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer, whose anti-German disposition and highly ambitious “colonial actions” (Liberia) had been problematic to the Brühl Palace, created a timely opportunity for the foreign ministry to tighten its control over the LMiK in order to limit costly “adventures” overseas and, above all, to use its preexisting structures to disseminate its own propagandistic message at home.¹⁰⁶ By the fall, Beck had entered into a steady communication with what was now turning into his full colonial proxy. (Figure 4)

In a note from September 18, 1936, written in response to the

LMiK’s intention to launch a propaganda happening called “Colonial Week,” the minister stated that the initiative was welcome, but he wished it to promote Poland’s population growth in line with the “Colonial Theses.”¹⁰⁷ By November, according to Noël, Beck made an effort to curb the fiery colonial discourse in government-friendly press in response to negative British reactions, delegating colonial propaganda to the theoretically independent LMiK.¹⁰⁸ At the end of the month, the planned country-wide celebrations, ultimately called the “Colonial Days,” occurred as far as the borderland city of Łuck and featured the slogan: “No matter their country of origin, Poland’s

¹⁰⁶ See Przemysław Olstowski, *Generał Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer* (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2000), 285–332.

¹⁰⁷ “Notatka dla Pana Dyrektora Gabinetu Ministra,” September 18, 1936, 2/322/3228, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁰⁸ “Léon Noël to Yvon Delbos,” November 10, 1936, 1.

raw materials must come from Polish emigrants and planters!”¹⁰⁹ Still, the equal role of the demographic aspect in the LMiK’s propaganda, normally inferior in relation commercial matters, suggested the government’s influence. In the Lublin province, for example, the LMiK passed a population resolution that, without explicitly singling out the Jews, identified the region’s “overpopulation” as the reason for its need of colonial emigration outlets where assimilation was allegedly not necessary.¹¹⁰ Manifesting the unprecedented scope of the happening that only a close cooperation with the government could guarantee, the LMiK geared the message of the “Colonial Days” separately to multiple socio-economic groups: peasants, workers, intelligentsia.¹¹¹ In the aftermath of the event, in May 1937, the LMiK’s seventh general summit in Poznań passed a



Figure 5. Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer's funeral in 1936. It was attended by thousands, paving the way to the emergence of his cult in the late 1930s. Source: NAC 1-W-377-16.

resolution that now set its colonial campaign completely in line with the “Colonial Theses,” incorporating the call to promote Jewish emigration.¹¹²

The government’s ultimate infiltration of the LMiK was a joint effort of the Brühl Palace and the military. This

¹⁰⁹ “Półroczne sprawozdanie z życia polskich związków i stowarzyszeń,” April 21, 1937, 2/1181/95, Urząd Wojewódzki w Łucku, AAN; “Żądamy dla Polski kolonii,” *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, November 25, 1936, 7.

¹¹⁰ “Rezolucja powzięta w listopadzie 1936 r. z racji ‘Dni Morsko-Kolonialnych,’” November 1936, 35/406/12/41, Starostwo Powiatowe Janowskie, APL.

¹¹¹ “Plan odczytu do opracowania dla środowisk robotniczych i włościańskich,” November 1936, 2/322/8492, MSZ, AAN; “Zagadnienie kolonialne Polski. Odczyt dla inteligencji,” November 1936, 2/322/8492, MSZ, AAN; “Kolonie - źródłem dobrobytu dla szerokich mas. Odczyt popularny,” November 1936, 2/322/8492, MSZ, AAN.

¹¹² “Uchwały i rezolucje VII Walnego Zjazdu Delegatów LMK dotyczące programowej działalności LMK,” May 1937, 2/322/2494, MSZ, AAN.

was, of course, in line with tradition, since Orlicz-Dreszer had been a prominent general and, according to one scholarly estimate, 30–40% of the LMiK's leadership belonged to the Polish officer corps.¹¹³ Moreover, thousands of mourners had attended Orlicz-Dreszer's stately and solemn funeral in Gdynia, which was also filmed to be shown to the Polish public.¹¹⁴ (Figure 5) In



Figure 6. Józef Beck had to address crowds demanding that Gdańsk remain attached to Poland (1939). Source: NAC 1-P-2858.

fact, Orlicz-Dreszer's cult was growing, and the LMiK was happy to promote it during the seventeenth anniversary of Poland's "marriage to the sea" in the spring of 1937.¹¹⁵ Noticing a power vacuum to be filled, the government supported the

nomination of Kazimierz Sosnkowski (1885–1969) – a skillful general with a sober view of Nazi Germany and a proponent of reconciliation with the anti-Sanacja opposition – as the LMiK's "Protector" on June 6, 1937.¹¹⁶ His nomination was perhaps a part of the scheme to force Sosnkowski, a rather inconvenient figure, into a sort of political exile, but the LMiK, whose purely maritime wing was heavily anti-German, apparently suited his ambitions. In any case, the position of the "Protector" was a new creation clearly intended as a means of outside supervision, with the expectation that Sosnkowski coordinate the LMiK's actions, attend its meetings, and serve as its

¹¹³ Daniel Duda, Bartłomiej Pączek, and Tomasz Szubrycht, *Oficerowie Wojska Polskiego jako działacze Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej* (Gdynia: Jerzy Pyrchla, 2010), 30–33.

¹¹⁴ "Gdynia Oksywie. Koniec tragedii powietrznej," 1936, PAT MF.271, FNAI.

¹¹⁵ "Półroczne sprawozdanie z życia polskich związków i stowarzyszeń," April 30, 1937, 1/1380/IV-45, Urząd Wojewódzki Lubelski, AAN.

¹¹⁶ "Uchwała Rady Głównej Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej w sprawie powołania Protektora Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej," June 6, 1937, I.302.4.2197, Generalny Inspektorat Sił Zbrojnych, CAW WBH.

liaison to the government.¹¹⁷ Regardless of his opinion of the Brühl Palace's foreign policy, which was often negative, Sosnkowski agreed that his protectorate's colonial activities should be limited to propaganda, which, in line with Beck's wishes, prohibited the LMiK from establishing or participating in any endeavors revolving around colonial settlement and trade.¹¹⁸

It is difficult to examine Poland's domestic colonial propaganda in isolation from the ebbs and flows of Beck's initiatives in Geneva. The LMiK's propaganda continued as the Brühl Palace proposed multilateral solutions to the Colonial Question in the geopolitically calm year 1937, but, to avoid alienating the Western powers, it occurred in the background and was not manifested in mass celebrations. The historian Marek Kowalski has argued that colonial discourse was used as a means of rallying the nation around the flag in the face of German aggressiveness in the years 1938-1939.¹¹⁹ (Figure 6) It was only in the following year, once Beck's colonial agenda had all but failed in Geneva and Europe's geopolitical security declined after the *Anschluss*, that a dramatic spike in colonial propaganda first took place, as Warsaw was anxious about Berlin's moves at the time. In December 1937 the British ambassador Kennard judged the reaffirmation of the French-Polish alliance a success for Beck given his apprehensiveness about the *Gleichschaltung* in the Reich.¹²⁰

The "Colonial Days" that took place between April 7 and April 13, 1938 signaled Beck's turn to using colonial aspirations as a diplomatic instrument in bilateral relations, especially in relation to the German expansion. In turn, the celebrations' organizers intended not only to inform

¹¹⁷ "Postanowienia Rady Głównej LMK dotyczące stanowiska i uprawnień Protektora Ligi," June 1937, I.302.4.2197, Generalny Inspektorat Sił Zbrojnych, CAW WBH.

¹¹⁸ "Uchwały I-go Zebrania połączonych Prezydiów Rady Głównej i Zarządu Głównego LMK pod przewodnictwem p. Gen. broni K. Sosnkowskiego," December 13, 1937, 2/322/9847, MSZ, AAN.

¹¹⁹ Marek Arpad Kowalski, *Dyskurs kolonialny w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, *Studia Ethnologica* (Warsaw: Instytut Etnologii i Antropologii Kulturowej Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2010), 179.

¹²⁰ "Howard William Kennard to Anthony Eden," December 14, 1937, FO 371/20764/C8668, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

the world about Poland's colonial demands but also to signal that Poland was a country to be expanded, rather than annexed. The "Colonial Days" assumed a special character and unprecedented scope, featuring propaganda elements including parades, building decorations, shopping exhibits, educational shows, radio broadcasts, cinematic displays, and collections for the Colonial Action Fund.¹²¹ In Warsaw, colonial-themed automobiles and street cars passed through



Figure 7. The "Colonial Days" parade in Kraków (1938). Source: NAC 1-P-347-3

the city, a conference took place at the "Colosseum" movie theater, and thousands of people gathered in a circus arena to listen to the LMiK's chairman Stanisław Kwaśniewski. In Kraków, a group of activists carrying palm trees passed through the city and a series of public talks took place in front of the

iconic Cloth Hall. (Figure 7) In Poznań, attracting a crowd of 40,000, the LMiK used creative metaphors to represent what was viewed as Poland's demographic-economic problem: erected thirty-three pillars standing for the country's thirty-three-million-strong population and displayed wagons filled with cotton and rubber in reference to the issue of raw materials.¹²² Smaller numbers of people participated in the "Colonial Days" in Lublin (20,000), Radom (10,000), and Brześć (1,500), among other towns and cities.¹²³

¹²¹ Stanisław Kwaśniewski, "Okólnik Nr. 2/38," February 18, 1938, 38, I.300.21.53, Departament Spraw Morskich i Kierownictwo Marynarki Wojennej, CAW WBH.

¹²² "Cała Polska żąda kolonii," *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, April 12, 1938, 5.

¹²³ Ibid.; "Sprawozdanie z życia polskich zrzeszeń społecznych za czas od 1.IV do 30.IX.1938," October 25, 1938, 2/1183/0/34, Urząd Wojewódzki w Brześciu nad Bugiem, AAN.

Equally importantly, the defense of the state was clearly connected to colonial expansion in propaganda productions produced at the time of the “Colonial Days.” One film made at the time called upon the public to donate money for the construction of a submarine chaser in addition to showing a chart with miniature ships moving in the direction of South America and West Africa to mark the expansiveness of Poland’s commercial network.¹²⁴ Furthermore, the LMiK depicted colonial expansion as an absolute need, as opposed to a cavalier ambition, with the poster advertising the “Colonial Days” showing a pair of hands extended in a gesture of imploration (Figure 8). It was, moreover, supposed to be a justified demand, with the semi-official *Gazeta Polska* writing that “while the brave western nations, led by the desire of profit and adventure, were conquering tremendous areas in distant lands, Poland was standing on guard, watching and

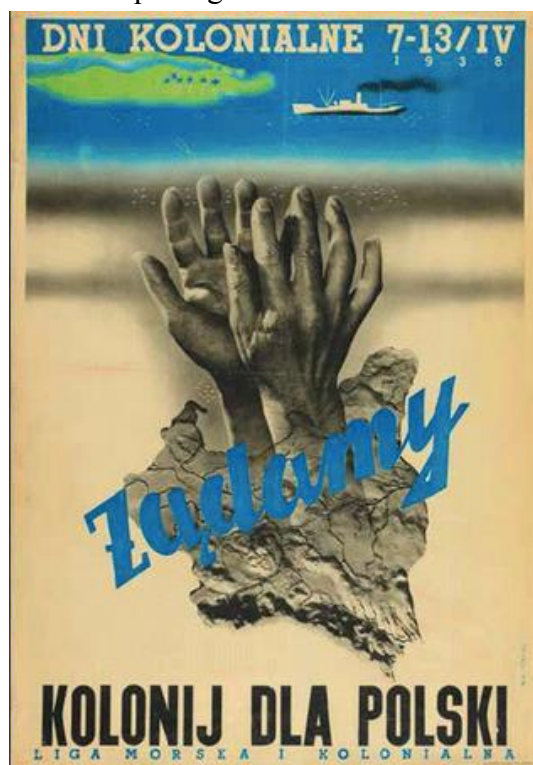


Figure 8. The poster advertising the “Colonial Days” of April 7-13, 1938 with the slogan: “We Demand Colonies for Poland!” Source: Public Domain.

fighting on endless prairies and forests for the safety of the frontier dividing two worlds: Asia and Europe.”¹²⁵

Western observers interpreted the “Colonial Days” in terms of geopolitical developments that affected Poland. The report of a U.S. diplomat traced the “enthusiasm displayed during the course of the week” to the “latent imperialism of the Polish people” recently displayed in relations with Lithuania but also noted the “steadily increasing German pressure in the colonial field.” He assumed that Warsaw believed that

“Germany will force in the near future an international

¹²⁴ Witold Dunin-Bredsznajder, “Budujemy ścigacz,” 1938, MF.761, FNAI.

¹²⁵ “Kolonie,” *Gazeta Polska*, April 10, 1938, 1.

conference to consider its colonial claims.”¹²⁶ Likewise, the British responses also pointed out German inspirations behind Polish propaganda. Whitehall’s Press Department stated: “This campaign has now, assisted by the German example, attained its full development. It is, like analogous colonial campaigns, based on an extraordinary collection of half-baked theories and distorted facts and is fraught with the most unpleasant possibilities.”¹²⁷ The British weekly *West Africa* remarked that “it is difficult (...), with all respect for a gifted and for generations unjustly treated nation, to see anything more respectable than skillful propaganda in the ‘colonial mass demonstrations’ recently arranged to take place all over Poland.” “Staking out fresh individual claims,” the journalist wrote, “is an instance of contributing heat without light; and there is more than enough heat already.”¹²⁸ Nor did the French rejoice at the news of colonial propaganda in Poland, which was accurately described in a letter from the LMiK’s French contact: “There is not a single Frenchman who does not recognize that colonies are indispensable to Poland. At the same time, however, there also is not a Frenchman who, reading an article on the topic, does not think that Poland does not want them from the French.”¹²⁹ In this manner, Warsaw received little understanding from London or Paris, although one British official advised Whitehall not to be “amused” and argued that Poland’s “‘need for overseas territories or settlement’ does not necessarily mean need for colonies in full sovereignty.”¹³⁰ Regardless of their own prejudices, Westerners correctly observed that Beck’s colonial agenda was partly a function of its German

¹²⁶ “Anthony Drexel Biddle to Cordell Hull,” April 22, 1938, 2–4, RG 59 860C.014, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

¹²⁷ “Press Department of the Foreign Office on Poland’s ‘Colonial Days,’” April 27, 1938, FO 371/21806/C3347, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹²⁸ “Give Us - Colonies!,” *West Africa*, April 23, 1938, RG 59 860C.014, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

¹²⁹ “C. de Kownacki to the LMiK,” October 15, 1938, 2/322/9848, MSZ, AAN.

¹³⁰ “Poland’s need for overseas territories for settlement of surplus population,” August 1937, FO 371/20763/C5666, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

analogue.

Germany and the Colonial Question

Warsaw's most important bilateral relationship in which the Colonial Question played a role was its fragile relationship with Berlin. In October 1936, the German ambassador Hans-Adolf von Moltke interpreted Beck's colonial agenda in Geneva as the Polish minister's act of taking advantage of the international turmoil to ensure Poland's readiness for the possibility of a new distribution of colonies.¹³¹ Essentially, the Germans welcomed Beck's agenda, but only insofar as it did not threaten the Reich's own interests. The *Hannoversche Anzeiger*, for example, subscribed to the Polish logic that countries had to become "empires" (*Imperien*) in order to shed their status as "colonies" (*Kolonien*).¹³² The review *Ostland*, on the other hand, interpreted the Polish interest in colonial matters as a sign that Germany succeeded in dragging Poland toward the revisionist camp. At the same time, however, the periodical argued that Warsaw would not succeed in distracting Berlin from the questions of Upper Silesia and the "Corridor."¹³³ In a similar manner, the *Völkischer Beobachter* approved of the Polish desire to orchestrate Jewish emigration but also described it as a potential scheme of "world Jewry," since Warsaw insisted that it should be internationally financed.¹³⁴ At the end of November 1936, the German Consulate General in Poznań informed Wilhelmstrasse that Poland's only colonial opportunity might be in acquiring former German colonies, which, according to Leon Bulowski's old thesis, it could inherit as one of the successor states of the *Kaiserreich*.¹³⁵ This was, of course, not in line with German interests,

¹³¹ "Hans-Adolf von Moltke to Wilhelmstrasse," October 6, 1936, RAV Warschau 57, PAAA.

¹³² "Kolonien oder Imperien?," *Hannoversche Anzeiger*, November 7, 1936.

¹³³ Cited in "M. Arnal, Chargé des Affaires de France à Berlin, à M. Delbos, Ministre des Affaires étrangères," 414.

¹³⁴ "Polen fordert internationale Finanzierung der jüdischen Auswanderung," *Völkischer Beobachter*, October 8, 1936.

¹³⁵ "German Consulate General in Poznań to Wilhelmstrasse," November 27, 1936, R 104194, Referat Pol.V Polen, RZ 211 Politische Abteilung 1936-1945, PAAA.

nor was any Polish influence in Angola, which Berlin continued to infiltrate. In October 1936, Tadeusz Romer accused the Germans of sponsoring anti-Polish articles in the Portuguese press, citing an article from *Diário de Lisboa* whose author, Guerra Maio, exclaimed that, unlike Portugal, which “gave the world a new civilization,” Poland lacked all maritime traditions and that it was only its desire to find dumping grounds for Jews that was behind Warsaw’s support for settlement projects.¹³⁶

Warsaw, as a weaker and less experienced colonial player, adopted a different attitude toward its more powerful neighbor’s colonial revisionism. Adjusting to circumstances, the Brühl Palace joined the chorus of Axis colonial demands to distract Berlin’s attention from Europe and/or to secure its own interests if it thought that a redistribution was about to occur. (Figure 9) The first of these tactics had already been considered by Polish diplomats when the British made certain colonial concessions to the Germans in March 1925. In response, the Polish legation in Berlin suggested that Warsaw should support channeling Berlin’s revisionism “in the colonial direction” to keep the Germans distracted from Europe.¹³⁷ In a similar way, in 1931 the Polish delegate to the Netherlands proposed “devising an action whereby the support of German colonial ambitions would be exchanged for Germany’s renunciation of revisionist projects vis-à-vis Poland.”¹³⁸ In fact, it was not always clear to the Poles in which direction the German expansion would proceed. In November 1933, a Polish consulate informed the legation in Berlin that in Westphalia, the otherwise colonial-minded National Socialists had abandoned Africa and decided to look for *Lebensraum* in the Baltics instead, where “Nordics,” rather than “colored citizens belonging to

¹³⁶ “Tadeusz Romer to the Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” October 30, 1936, 2/322/6970, MSZ, AAN.

¹³⁷ Elmer, “Legation in Berlin to the Political Department,” March 18, 1925, 2/474/1.10/417, Ambasada RP w Berlinie, AAN.

¹³⁸ Tomasz Bielski, “Report from conversation with Joost van Hamel,” November 12, 1931, 4, 2/322/4127, MSZ, AAN.

less valuable races,” could be found.¹³⁹ While the Brühl Palace’s hope that Hitler would choose to channel his anger in the direction of Africa was not unfounded, certain unofficial Polish initiatives to reach a colonial understanding with the Reich turned out to be quite fantastic. In June 1936, one Władysław Wolski from the town of Rawicz wrote a letter to the Führer himself, pitching his “Project of Securing Peace in Europe” as an attempt to smooth out differences between European powers in order to create a solid anti-Bolshevik block. Wolski argued for a series of territorial exchanges, asking the Germans to allow East Prussia, identified as a Slavic territory, to be



Figure 9. Cabaret scene depicting the German-Polish geopolitical struggle. The figure on the left represents Wilhelm II (Germany) and the figure on the right represents Beck (Poland). The reason for the anti-Semitic depiction of Beck is unclear but was probably related to his “Jewish” looks and the legend of his alleged Jewish roots. Source NAC 1-K-11584-1.

incorporated into Poland in exchange for the Reich’s annexation of Austria. This way, in his opinion, Hitler would preserve the “racial purity” of his nation.¹⁴⁰ According to the plan, all of Germany’s former colonies would be restituted with the exception of Cameroon, which would be split between Poland and Czechoslovakia.¹⁴¹

Beck never made such offers to Hitler, however, and never officially proposed any colonial partnerships between the two states. There was, after all, the long-standing Polish interest in the former German colonies and in supporting the Versailles Treaty, which, as the journalist Edward Ligocki pointed out, placed the Polish demands “in stark contradiction to German claims” and

¹³⁹ Aleksy Wdziękoński, “Consulate in Essen to the Legation in Berlin,” November 10, 1933, 2/474/1.10/418, Ambasada RP w Berlinie, AAN.

¹⁴⁰ “Władysław Wolski to Adolf Hitler,” August 3, 1936, R 104099, Referat Pol.V Polen, RZ 211 Politische Abteilung 1936-1945, PAAA.

¹⁴¹ Władysław Wolski, “Plan zabezpieczenia pokoju w Europie,” June 1936, 7, R 104099, Referat Pol.V Polen, RZ 211 Politische Abteilung 1936-1945, PAAA.

refuted the “old fairy tale about Poland’s gravitating toward Berlin’s orbit.”¹⁴² Still, the Polish minister was testing the Germans. In November 1936, the Brühl Palace dispatched the LMİK’s Stanisław Podoski to infiltrate the German colonial circles in Berlin and Breslau (Wrocław). The Western Department of the foreign ministry asked the embassy in Berlin to supply Podoski with a journalist’s license to facilitate his access to relevant lectures.¹⁴³ By the end of the year, at a local conference in Berlin, another specialist working for the embassy, Lubomirski, had the opportunity to speak to Heinrich Schnee, the former leader of the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft*. During the conversation, Schnee suggested that Germany’s colonial demands reflected not only its need for raw materials but also its hurt national pride. Lubomirski accepted this as an accurate description of the changing German attitude toward the Colonial Question, despite Schnee’s personal grievances stemming from his colonial society’s falling prey to the *Gleichschaltung*. In Lubomirski’s opinion, Hitler was now supposedly less interested in putting forward Schacht’s economic arguments for the granting of unspecified concessions in Africa to the Reich and more adamant about the return of specific territories (Cameroon, Namibia, etc.) as a way of overturning Versailles.¹⁴⁴ In any case, the German leadership was indeed unwilling to join Polish diplomats in their Geneva campaign. In January 1937, Beck unsuccessfully attempted to persuade his German counterpart Konstantin von Neurath to participate in the works of the League’s raw materials committee as a non-member collaborating nation.¹⁴⁵ In July 1937, a report written for the French minister of colonies confirmed that implementing open-door policies in the colonies would not satisfy the Reich since Hitler would accept nothing short of full German political sovereignty in

¹⁴² Edward Ligocki, “Czarne lądy a Polska (II),” *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, March 11, 1937, 4.

¹⁴³ Tadeusz Kunicki, “Western Department to the Embassy in Berlin,” October 8, 1936, 2/474/1.10/421, Ambasada RP w Berlinie, AAN.

¹⁴⁴ “St. Lubomirski to Józef Beck,” December 1, 1936, 2/474/1.10/421, Ambasada RP w Berlinie, AAN.

¹⁴⁵ “Memorandum on the Conversation of Minister Beck with von Neurath, the Reich Minister of Foreign Affairs,” January 20, 1937, 281–82, doc. 64, Diplomat in Berlin.

Africa.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, the *IKC* reported that Berlin was not interested in any schemes of carving a new political entity out of the Congo and Angola.¹⁴⁷

Notwithstanding discouraging signals, Beck remained somewhat open to the possibility of persuading the Reich to create a common colonial front as long as the initiative was a multilateral one and remained dressed in internationalist terms. At the beginning of February, Józef Lipski sent him a detailed report from Hitler's speech at the Reichstag from January 30, 1937. The Polish ambassador suggested that "it is worth mentioning that a tendency runs through Hitler's speech to support Italy in its Mediterranean actions [expansion], undoubtedly expecting that this is the way to render colonial questions timely."¹⁴⁸ Moreover, Lipski drew Beck's attention to the Führer's economic framing of the Colonial Question, or the claim that Germany would need to keep increasing exports to the detriment of the West unless it received its colonies back. Not noticing what was likely the dictator's ruse, the ambassador pointed out that Hitler's approach resembled Schacht's in this one respect, since both leaders did not seem to regard Germany's autarchy and isolation from the world's economy as something inevitable.¹⁴⁹ More ominous suggestions likely reached Warsaw, too, however. In November 1937 the Polish consul in Leipzig, Feliks Chiczewski, informed the embassy in Berlin that Thüringen's *Gauleiter*, Fritz Sauckel – described as an "old, long-serving naval officer, one of the first warriors of the Nazi revolution" – stated during a colonial rally that, according to Nazi doctrine, the Colonial Question (*Kolonialfrage*) was different from the "question of [living] space" (*Raumfrage*). According to Sauckel, the latter

¹⁴⁶ "Rapport à Monsieur le Ministre des Colonies sur l'évolution de la question coloniale en Allemagne," July 24, 1937, 7, 61COL1040, Direction des Affaires politiques, Ministère des Colonies, ANOM.

¹⁴⁷ "Wilhelmstrasse to the German Embassy in Warsaw," December 7, 1937, RAV Warschau 62, PAAA.

¹⁴⁸ "Józef Lipski to Józef Beck," February 7, 1939, 489, doc. 134, Diplomat in Berlin.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 494.

“could only be solved in Europe.”¹⁵⁰ Still, one month later, when Moltke broached the topic, Beck pointed out that, although Warsaw presented the Colonial Question in internationalist terms and had never possessed a colonial empire, “a certain similarity of interests [with Berlin] was to be noted.”¹⁵¹

The Specter of British Colonial Appeasement of Germany

It was the renewed British attempt at a colonial appeasement of Germany that encouraged Beck to articulate his colonial agenda ever more strongly. In January 1938 the director of the PAT in Berlin sent Józef Lipski a report from his conversation with the secretary of the British embassy, J.A. Kirkpatrick. According to the British official, London had decided to offer Berlin colonial territories in exchange for peace and the Reich’s participation in a “sort of a league of European states.” The Germans would also need to pledge their support for the independence of Eastern Europe and to refrain from building military bases in those colonies.¹⁵² At the same time, Halifax was not sure that negotiations would succeed, since the two parties “spoke entirely different languages” reflecting different mentalities. According to Kirkpatrick, moreover, the choice of territory was a conundrum. Only the former German East Africa was in question, but territorial adjustments would need to take place to prevent restituted German colonies from bordering Italian colonies in the region; London did not wish Axis colonies forming a consolidated bloc in Africa.¹⁵³ Furthermore, Berlin might question the profitability of East Africa, since the raw materials sought by the German industry did not occur in the region. In any case, in Kirkpatrick’s opinion, Whitehall

¹⁵⁰ “Feliks Chiczewski to the Embassy in Berlin,” November 15, 1937, 2/474/1.10/422, Ambasada RP w Berlinie, AAN.

¹⁵¹ Hans-Adolf von Moltke, “The German Ambassador in Warsaw (Moltke) to the German Foreign Ministry,” December 11, 1937, 112, doc. 68, DGFP 1918-1945 D/I.

¹⁵² St. Dembiński, “Raport Kierownika Oddziału P.A.T. w Berlinie dla Pana Ambasadora R.P. w Berlinie,” January 19, 1938, 1–2, 701/67/3, Ambassador Józef Lipski Papers, JPIA.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

did not mind a German leadership in Europe, which colonial concessions would guarantee, as long as it did not threaten British imperial interests.¹⁵⁴ In March 1938, similar reports of an impending colonial appeasement might have persuaded Apoloniusz Zarychta to commission one of his officials to examine the German attitude toward the Polish aspirations and to “find a way to a situation in which the two countries maintained a friendly attitude toward each other’s colonial demands, or at least one in which they did not impede each other.”¹⁵⁵ Zarychta’s initiative did not result in anything tangible, however, since Beck refrained from making official inquiries with Berlin.

The Polish minister was more open to forming a common colonial front with another revisionist power, Italy, the idea of which had already floated for a couple of years. According to the Polish embassy in Rome, the Italians had long contemplated proposing a new division of mandates and colonies, which would take Polish interests into consideration.¹⁵⁶ In May 1936 an Italian expert named Remo Renato Petitto came to Poland and argued that Italy and Poland should cooperate in the colonial realm, given their respective demographic pressures and common “Latinity.”¹⁵⁷ In the fall of 1936, moreover, Poland’s ambassador in Rome told Bastianini that “the Polish government would be very pleased to establish close contact and a common course of action” in Geneva.¹⁵⁸ At the same time, Roman Piotrowicz published a summary of Poland’s colonial agenda in the Italian journal *Construire*.¹⁵⁹ The Polish overtures toward Italy failed,

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 4.

¹⁵⁵ “Notatka o programie rozmowy w Ambasadzie RP w Berlinie otrzymana przez ambasadę,” March 28, 1938, 2/474/1.10/424, Ambasada RP w Berlinie, AAN.

¹⁵⁶ Alfred Wysocki, “Raport ambasadora w Rzymie o polityce zagranicznej Włoch i stosunkach polsko-włoskich,” July 22, 1936, 425, doc. 202, PDD 1936.

¹⁵⁷ “German Consulate General in Katowice to Wilhelmstrasse,” May 31, 1936, RAV Warschau 57, PAAA; “Léon Noël to Yvon Delbos,” June 4, 1936, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

¹⁵⁸ “Il sottosegretario agli esteri, Bastianini, al ministro degli esteri, Ciano,” October 1, 1936, 157, doc. 145, IDDI 1935-1939 8/V.

¹⁵⁹ Roman Piotrowicz, “Lo sviluppo delle idee coloniali in Polonia,” *Construire*, October 1936, 56–64.

however, likely because Mussolini, a professed enemy of the League, was not interested in any “solution” to what the two nations jointly constructed as the Colonial Question through international channels. Still, in the face of a pending colonial appeasement, the Polish minister planned to use his diplomatic visit to Rome in March 1938 as leverage to persuade Italy to fulfill a more specific Polish “colonial” demand. He wished to bargain Poland’s official recognition of Italy’s annexation of Ethiopia for the possibility of sending Jews to what had become Italian East Africa.¹⁶⁰ In fact, during a banquet in Rome, Beck made a toast to the health of “King of Italy and Emperor of Ethiopia.”¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, as their differences regarding Germany became clear, the two states chose not to discuss the Colonial Question in any considerable detail.¹⁶²

Notwithstanding this Italian failure, Beck’s willingness to address the Colonial Question increased during the Sudetenland crisis leading to the appeasement at Munich in September 1938. (Figure 10) In June, Edward Raczyński asked Beck rhetorically if the “English government did not consciously practice a policy of partial isolation, accepting the thesis of *Lebensraum* for Germany in Eastern and Central Europe in exchange for relaxation in the colonial realm.”¹⁶³ Léon Noël would later admit to Howard Kennard that a similar trend of turning away from eastern Europe and toward the colonies existed in France.¹⁶⁴ In October, the Polish military intelligence (*Dwójka*) reported that after the infamous meeting with Neville Chamberlain at Bad Godesberg, during which Hitler issued an ultimatum concerning the Sudetenland, British newspapers warned

¹⁶⁰ “North Winship to Cordell Hull,” March 1, 1938, RG 59 760C.65, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

¹⁶¹ “Phillips to Cordell Hull,” March 9, 1938, RG 59 760C.65, Department of State Central Files, Central Decimal Files, TNA (U.S.).

¹⁶² “German Embassy in Rome to Wilhelmstrasse,” March 11, 1938, 3, RAV Paris 473a, PAAA.

¹⁶³ “Raport nr 49/WB/tj/130 E. Raczyńskiego zawierający komentarz do rozmowy z N. Chamberlainem,” June 18, 1938, 190–91, doc. 105, Monachium.

¹⁶⁴ “Howard William Kennard to Viscount Halifax,” November 28, 1938, FO 371/21800/C14878, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

that the Colonial Question was on the table, too. Citing the British leader's assurance in the House of Commons that differences with Germany in this matter would not lead to war, journalists worried that Africa could fall prey to another appeasement.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, as German troops marched into the Sudetenland, it did seem as if the Reich might now turn its appetites toward Africa. The *IKC* stated that Hitler, pretending to return to Schacht's thinking, was no longer demanding the return of Togo, Cameroon, Namibia, or Tanganyika, since none of these areas were rich in zinc,



Figure 10. Mussolini and Hitler in Munich. The European appeasement could have been followed by a colonial appeasement. Source: NAC 1-M-267-7.

lead, copper, oil, or gold. Instead, the propaganda minister Josef Goebbels had allegedly called for an enormous colonial concession to be carved in central Africa out of British, French, Portuguese, and Belgian possessions.¹⁶⁶ In fact, the British did draft a scheme according to which the great powers, including Germany, would administer central Africa collectively, with respect for "trade equality" and "protection of Native races." The last point, it was hoped, would placate British public opinion.¹⁶⁷

In reaction to the rumors of colonial appeasement, the Brühl Palace decided that it was time to remind the world about Poland's own ambitions, with the LMiK's leadership instructed on October 14, 1938 to engage in colonial propaganda, albeit without mentioning any specific territorial interests in Africa and without

¹⁶⁵ "Sprawa żądań kolonialnych Niemiec /w czasie od 22.IX br./ w oświeceniu prasy," October 1938, I.302.4.163, Generalny Inspektorat Sił Zbrojnych, CAW WBH.

¹⁶⁶ Hajot, "Niemcy żądają kolonii - Polska musi się przygotować," *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, October 12, 1938, 4.

¹⁶⁷ Noel Buxton, "A Scheme of Colonial Redistribution," October 14, 1938, FO 371/21682/C13222, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

admitting to any agreements with the government in this respect.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, the foreign ministry supported the participation of Jan Czekanowski in the eighth convention of the Fascist “Volta” congress, which took place at the Royal Academy of Italy in Rome from October 4 to October 11, 1938. According to Czekanowski, the congress was not so much a conference of Fascist sympathizers but an opportunity for the participating powers to examine one another’s attitude toward the “Colonial Question.”¹⁶⁹ It is not clear if the Brühl Palace supported the entire Polish delegation, which also featured Leon Sapieha: an anti-Semitic aristocrat, owner of a plantation in the Congo, and white supremacist whose talk was associated with German and Italian racism.¹⁷⁰ In any case, however, Warsaw maintained an extensive correspondence with Czekanowski. After his talk about the so-called “anthropological components of the African population,” the Polish anthropologist compared European “solidarity” in Africa with the failure of the national delegations to come together to lay wreaths at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Rome. In response to this remark, the governor of the Belgian Congo told Czekanowski in private that his superiors feared British designs to appease the Germans with Belgian colonies. Instead, to counteract colonial appeasement, Warsaw and Brussels could propose the introduction of open-door policies in Africa.¹⁷¹

The creeping British colonial appeasement of Nazi Germany informed the Polish reactions to the “Volta” convention, although Warsaw did not seem interested in Bronisław Malinowski,

¹⁶⁸ “Notatka,” October 14, 1938, 2/322/9847, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁶⁹ Jan Czekanowski, “Sprawozdanie z wyjazdu na ‘Convegno Volta 1938’ urządzonego przez Kr. Włoską Akademię,” November 1, 1938, 2, 2/322/9735, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁷⁰ Leon Sapieha, “Konieczność solidarności europejskiej: przyszłość i obrona europejskiej cywilizacji w Afryce” (III Convegno “Volta,” Reale Accademia d’Italia, October 4, 1938); “Embassy in Rome to Georges Bonnet,” December 7, 1938, 106CPCOM/421, Série Z-Europe (Pologne), Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

¹⁷¹ Czekanowski, “Sprawozdanie z wyjazdu na ‘Convegno Volta 1938’ urządzonego przez Kr. Włoską Akademię,” 5–6.

who represented Britain with a talk titled “Modern Anthropology and European Rule in Africa.”¹⁷² Instead, however, Czekanowski reported that a certain Tracy Phillips, most likely an agent of the British intelligence, was working to instigate conflicts between other national delegates, suggesting different colonial “solutions” for different countries. In particular, Phillips suggested to the German delegate that a concert of great powers could decide to carve a nominally independent Ukrainian state out of southeastern Poland to meet Berlin’s *Lebensraum* demands.¹⁷³ Indeed, on October 18 Phillips, sent Halifax an account of the convention and suggested that London should preempt Berlin with its own plan of colonial restitution to Germany.¹⁷⁴ Czekanowski later informed Zarychta that Phillips was connected to the company of the same name and that his overture was directed at Karl Krüger, an academic connected to the German intelligence.¹⁷⁵ In the meantime, the Brühl Palace received more proof that British colonial appeasement of Nazi Germany was pending and that it could come at Poland’s expense, making the Colonial Question most relevant to Warsaw. For the first time, moreover, the matter emerged explicitly in Polish-German relations.

By the end of October 1938, the Germans had made their own colonial overtures to Polish diplomats. Receiving Józef Lipski at Obersalzberg on September 20, Hitler and his new foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop suggested that Berlin could find a multilateral solution to what both Poland and Germany agreed was some form of a “Jewish Question.” Lipski reported to Beck that Hitler “has in mind an idea for settling the Jewish problem by way of emigration to the colonies

¹⁷² Bronisław Malinowski, “Modern Anthropology and European Rule in Africa,” in *Promosso Dalla Classe Delle Scienze Morali e Storiche* (Rome: Reale Accademia d’Italia, VIII Convegno ‘Volta,’ 1938).

¹⁷³ Świtkowski, “The Second Bureau of the General Staff to the Consular Department,” January 18, 1939, 2/322/9735, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁷⁴ “Tracy Phillips to Viscount Halifax,” October 18, 1938, FO 371/21682/C12711, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁷⁵ “Jan Czekanowski to Apoloniusz Zarychta,” May 19, 1939, 2/322/9735, MSZ, AAN.

in accordance with an understanding with Poland, Hungary, and possibly also Romania (at which point I told him that if he finds can find such a solution we will erect him a beautiful monument in Warsaw).”¹⁷⁶ Lipski’s statement should be viewed in the broader context of Beck’s search for technocratic “solutions” that bore similarities to the Germans’ own anti-Semitic projects. The Polish interest in the colonial dimension of the Jewish Question might have encouraged Hitler to incorporate it into the “global solution” (*Gesamtlösung*) of Polish-German relations proposed to Lipski one month later in Berchtesgaden during the ambassador’s meeting with Ribbentrop. According to the offer, the Reich would incorporate Gdańsk and build an extra-territorial highway to East Prussia through Polish territory. In exchange, Poland would be invited to join the Anti-Comintern Pact and benefit from a Polish-German cooperation in colonial matters, including Jewish emigration.¹⁷⁷ While one of Hitler’s motivations was certainly to appeal to Warsaw’s anti-Jewish sentiments, there is another possible explanation for the inclusion of the “colonial” and “Jewish” problems in the proposition: the German understanding that Polish colonial demands interfered with the British acceptance of their own. In fact, Herbert von Dirksen, the German ambassador in London, wrote to Wilhelmstrasse on October 31, 1938 that “anxiety about colonial demands by Poland prevents a positive attitude from being adopted [in Britain] toward our colonial claims.”¹⁷⁸ Since the Polish colonial agenda was apparently working against some form of a British colonial appeasement, Wilhelmstrasse might have hoped that a common colonial front with Poland was desirable.

¹⁷⁶ “Lipski to Beck,” September 20, 1938, 411, doc. 99, Diplomat in Berlin.

¹⁷⁷ “Note from the Conversation between the Ambassador in Berlin and the German Minister of Foreign Affairs,” October 1938, 3–4, doc. 1, PDFP 1938/1939; Hewel, “Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Minister’s Personal Staff,” October 24, 1938, 104–7, doc. 81, DGFP 1918-1945 D/V.

¹⁷⁸ Herbert von Dirksen, “The Ambassador in Great Britain to the Foreign Ministry,” October 31, 1938, 321–22, doc. 260, Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945 D/IV.

Eradicating the Polish opposition to the Reich's expansion in Africa would certainly turn into an asset in the context of Oswald Pirow's new colonial appeasement tour. In November 1938, the defense minister of the Union of South Africa once again came to Berlin and London in the hope of brokering an understanding between the two powers in Africa and averting a conflict in Europe. He told the British ambassador in Berlin, Neville Henderson, that his country "would in principle welcome Germany back in Africa as before the war, except that, circumstances being different, the Union [of South Africa] does not want her in the same places."¹⁷⁹ According to Edward Raczyński, Pirow was trying to reach an understanding with Berlin but Hitler's insistence that all of the Reich's former colonies must be returned made the discussion difficult.¹⁸⁰ At the same time, the Union's deputy prime minister Jan Smuts informed the British High Commissioner, William Henry Clark, that Pirow had not received an official mandate to discuss colonial matters but admitted that compensating the Reich financially for the loss of colonies should be taken into consideration.¹⁸¹ In fact, Pirow told Hitler on November 24, 1938 that his government's attitude toward the question of returning South West Africa, now the Union's mandate, to the Reich "changed a great deal." While the mandate remained of "great political and military importance for South Africa," Pirow would help Hitler "obtain other areas for Germany in exchange" and mentioned East Africa in this context. The German dictator remained rather uninterested, stating that discussing what he identified as the Colonial Question further was useless as long as Britain was opposed to uninhibited German expansion, and that the "Jewish Question" was more urgent.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ "Neville Henderson on a conversation with Oswald Pirow," November 11, 1938, FO 371/21682/C13847, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁸⁰ Edward Raczyński, "Raport polityczny No. 23/1. Wizyta ministra Pirowa w Londynie," November 16, 1938, 2/474/1.10/424, Ambasada RP w Berlinie, AAN.

¹⁸¹ "Telegram from the High Commissioner of the United Kingdom in the Union of South Africa," November 19, 1938, FO 371/21682/C12908, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁸² Mackensen, "Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Minister's Personal Staff," November 24, 1938, 339–40, doc. 271, DGFP 1918-1945 D/IV.

Regardless of their outcome, Pirow's overtures explain why the Brühl Palace did not forget about Africa at a time when European issues seemed paramount.

The Colonial Question on the Eve of World War II

Beck was determined to fend off Hitler's demands regarding Gdańsk and the "Polish Corridor," yielding to which would turn his country into a German satellite and drastically limit its access to the Baltic Sea and therefore its ability to carry out colonial projects. Hence, the Polish foreign minister communicated Poland's unwillingness to accept the German proposition during his meetings with Hitler and Ribbentrop on January 5, 1939.¹⁸³ Beck was not in a position to accept any colonial overtures and did not offer a response to the following statement from the German dictator: "If the Western Powers had shown more understanding of the German demand for colonies, he, the Führer, would perhaps have made available for the solution of the Jewish problem a territory in Africa which could have been used not only for German but also for Polish Jews."¹⁸⁴ At the same time, Beck was willing to play the colonial card as long as possible to keep the Führer distracted and to accomplish other foreign policy aims. In a memorandum to President Roosevelt from January 18, 1939, the U.S. ambassador Anthony Drexel Biddle suggested that Warsaw was launching a new colonial propaganda campaign hoping that Berlin's responses would pressure the French to "look to Warsaw with a more friendly eye."¹⁸⁵ Forgetting that Poland's existence itself had been sanctioned during the Paris Peace Conference, Beck hoped that Hitler interpreted the

¹⁸³ "Record of the Conversation between the Under Secretary of State and the Ambassador in Berlin about Minister Beck's Meeting with Chancellor Hitler at Berchtesgaden on 5 January," January 8, 1939, 79–80, doc. 28, PDFP 1938/1939.

¹⁸⁴ Schmidt, "Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Minister's Secretariat," January 5, 1939, 157, doc. 119, DGFP 1918-1945 D/V.

¹⁸⁵ Anthony Drexel Biddle, "Memorandum for President Franklin D. Roosevelt," January 18, 1939, 5–6, Poland, January-March 1939, Box 47, President's Secretary's File, FDRPL.

Colonial Question as the last unresolved aspect of the hated *Diktat* and that his attention would turn to Africa until his army was fully ready for a European war.¹⁸⁶

In a message to Georges Bonnet, Léon Noël argued that Beck had adopted an “ambiguous attitude” and played a “double game”: his fiery domestic rhetoric allowed him to court the revisionist powers while his “moderation” and refusal to claim any particular territory could earn him rewards with the British and French. It was a “double game” that worked, since Noël suggested to the Quai d’Orsay that Poland should be given a certain degree of satisfaction by balancing the country’s trade with French colonies to ensure that it does not fall in line with the “proletarian states.”¹⁸⁷ In 1939, insofar as foreign policy was concerned, Beck’s colonial agenda indeed turned into a function of negotiating bilateral alliances, especially since the British suggested that a colonial appeasement, including a satisfaction of the Polish demands, would no longer be possible.¹⁸⁸ In the face of increasing pressure from the Germans, the Polish minister used colonial aspirations as leverage during two important meetings with foreign diplomatic leaders: Galeazzo Ciano in Warsaw later in February and Edward Halifax in London in early April. Beck hoped that an appearance of a Polish-Italian colonial understanding could help him not only court Italy but, more importantly, pressure Britain to offer a higher bid in terms of a military alliance. Once again, the LMiK played a crucial role in disseminating appropriate propaganda, with the Brühl Palace shamelessly delegating its own employees to supervise the task.¹⁸⁹ The LMiK was supposed to release a statement praising Italy’s colonial “accomplishments” and asking for its recognition of

¹⁸⁶ “Anthony Drexel Biddle to the Department of State,” February 15, 1939, 311, doc. 18, Biddle Papers.

¹⁸⁷ “M. Léon Noël, Ambassadeur de France à Varsovie, à Georges Bonnet, Ministre des Affaires étrangères,” February 7, 1939, 122–23, doc. 67, DDF 1932-1939 2/XIV.

¹⁸⁸ “Frank Walters to Bolesław Celiński,” February 2, 1939, 2/322/9737, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁸⁹ “Lista Rady Głównej LMK wybranej przez VIII-y Walny Zjazd Delegatów LMK w 1939 r.,” 1939, 2/322/9849, MSZ, AAN; “Notatka dla Pana D.D.K. do rozmowy z Panem Gen. Sosnkowskim,” March 18, 1939, 2/322/9847, MSZ, AAN.

Poland's analogous demographic and economic needs.¹⁹⁰ At the same time, Roman Piotrowicz argued in an Italian journal that, while Warsaw still preferred multilateral solutions, its interests in



Figure 11. Ciano (left) and Beck in Warsaw (1939). Source: NAC 1-D-1990-20.

the colonial realm did not differ much from Rome's.¹⁹¹

Beck's courting of Galeazzo Ciano in Warsaw did not escape Whitehall's notice but was interpreted as a courting of the entire Axis. (Figure 11) The British chargé d'affaires in Warsaw, Clifford Norton, broached the topic with Michał Łubieński on February 24, 1939 and was told that Poland required no "territorial sovereignty" in Africa and that "there would therefore be no parallelism with German demands."

"Though of course," Łubieński added, "if Poland raised her voice in the wilderness without German accompaniment, she would get nowhere."¹⁹² In any case, Howard Kennard informed Halifax that, save for "embarrassing" anti-German protests around the country, the Italian count's stay in Poland was cordial but did not result in anything practical. According to the British ambassador, Italy was opposed to Hungary's absorption of Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia and preferred "to see Germany involved in a north-easterly direction, whereas Poland would, on the whole, feel happier if such expansion took a more southerly route."¹⁹³ At the same time, Howard predicted that "any remarks that Count Ciano or his suite may have let fall on this subject [colonial aspirations] will doubtless have fallen on fertile ground, in spite of Poland's reluctance, already mentioned, to connive at the acquisition of colonial benefits by the despoiling

¹⁹⁰ "Notatka w sprawie projektu Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej wykorzystania wizyty min. Ciano dla celów propagandy naszych zainteresowań kolonialnych," February 12, 1939, 2/322/9742, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁹¹ Roman Piotrowicz, *La questione coloniale nell'opinione pubblica polacca*, 1939, 106–8.

¹⁹² "Clifford Norton on his conversation with Count Łubieński," February 24, 1939, 3, FO 371/23148/C2685, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁹³ "Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax," March 3, 1939, 178, doc. 173, DBFP 1919-1939 3/IV.

or weakening of France.” Moreover, “the furtherance of a colonial campaign at this moment would have the additional advantage for Poland of distracting Germany’s attention from her eastern frontiers for the time being.”¹⁹⁴

Indeed, Ciano was not looking to forge a tighter relationship with Poland. In Beck’s words, “that man is afraid of his own shadow when there is talk of policy with regard to Germany in Eastern Europe.”¹⁹⁵ In his own account from the trip, the Italian minister wrote that Poland was not “a country which has been won over to the system of the Axis and of the Triangle, but it would also be unjust to describe Poland *outright* as an enemy country.”¹⁹⁶ Moreover, as Ciano confessed to the German ambassador in Rome, Beck had not tackled the Colonial Question in their conversation.¹⁹⁷ The French embassy in Rome likewise informed Georges Bonnet that Beck had dismissed Ciano’s colonial overtures, wishing to distance Poland from both the Axis and Western camps and to wait for the question to resurface in the international forum: this was, in fact, an attitude not pleasing to the fascists.¹⁹⁸ According to Georges Bonnet’s memoirs, too, the French government had asked Beck not to support the Italian colonial claims and the Polish minister kept his word.¹⁹⁹ After Ciano’s departure, Beck himself assured Kennard that neither Berlin nor Rome had inspired the colonial propaganda that, in March 1939, was once again underway in Poland.²⁰⁰

It is not completely clear why Beck encouraged the LMiK’s propaganda before his trip to London to negotiate a bilateral defense agreement with Britain. Kennard suggested to Halifax that

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 179.

¹⁹⁵ Józef Beck, “Personal Letter of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Ambassador in Rome,” May 10, 1939, 258, doc. 118, PDPF 1938/1939.

¹⁹⁶ Galeazzo Ciano, *Ciano’s Diplomatic Papers* (London: Odhams Press, 1948), 274–75.

¹⁹⁷ “German Embassy in Rome to Wilhelmstrasse,” March 28, 1939, R 104100, Referat Pol.V Polen, RZ 211 Politische Abteilung 1936–1945, PAAA.

¹⁹⁸ “Embassy in Rome to Georges Bonnet,” March 2, 1939, 106CPCOM/421, Série Z-Europe (Pologne), Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

¹⁹⁹ Georges Bonnet, *Défense de la paix: Fin d’une Europe* (Éditions du Cheval Ailé, 1948), 129.

²⁰⁰ “Rozmowa Pana Ministra z Ambasadorem brytyjskim w sprawach kolonialnych,” March 4, 1939, 2/322/9737, MSZ, AAN.

Ribbentrop and Ciano had likely encouraged the idea that, “to use a phrase that is very much in vogue at the moment, ‘a great re-distribution of colonial territories is at hand.’”²⁰¹ The British ambassador also argued that Poland’s diplomatic leader cynically took advantage of colonial propaganda for domestic purposes, since it was “not inconvenient to create an issue which tends to set Polish opinion against the democratic Powers at a time that [public] opinion is (for him) embarrassingly anti-German.”²⁰² Noël likewise assumed that Beck believed that Britain and France made yet another attempt at the colonial appeasement of Nazi Germany. They cited Beck’s threat that Poland’s demands, while still in their moderate form, could assume a different character if ignored.²⁰³ It is also possible that, as Łubieński suggested, colonial propaganda channeled nationalist sentiment away from anti-Semitism, which was an issue that favored the opposition and caused unrest in the country.²⁰⁴ Lastly, the German embassy in Warsaw suggested that Beck viewed the LMİK’s propaganda as leverage ahead of his trip to London but would not face Halifax with full-fledged colonial demands.²⁰⁵ Furthermore, the Colonial Question, insofar as it was constructed to mean a method of spurring Poland’s industrial development, was probably important to the Polish leader in and of itself. While it was likely a combination of reasons that motivated Beck, the last two seem to be the most logical explanations for an action that might otherwise be viewed as detached from the reality of the immediate German threat.

Whitehall was not receptive to the Brühl Palace’s first and last official introduction of the topic into the two powers’ bilateral relations. After noticing the Colonial Question listed as one of

²⁰¹ “Howard William Kennard to Viscount Halifax,” March 7, 1939, 3, FO 371/23150/2831, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁰³ “Léon Noël to Georges Bonnet,” March 8, 1939, 106CPCOM/421, Série Z-Europe (Pologne), Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

²⁰⁴ “Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax,” March 10, 1939, 217, doc. 196, DBFP 1919-1939 3/IV.

²⁰⁵ “German Embassy in Warsaw to Wilhelmstrasse,” March 9, 1939, R 104100, Referat Pol.V Polen, RZ 211 Politische Abteilung 1936-1945, PAAA.

his meeting agenda items, Halifax instructed Kennard to tell Beck not to broach the topic in London since “there was no colonial question between the United Kingdom and Poland.”²⁰⁶ Beck expressed surprise, wishing to know what subject limits London was imposing and whether his visit was opportune at the present time.²⁰⁷ Łubieński then admitted to Norton that a colonial campaign in full swing was “embarrassing” but, at the end, it was still “better than any anti-Jewish campaign.” In response, Norton agreed that Beck could address the Colonial Question more precisely in terms of what the Polish minister viewed as Poland’s demographic-economic problem but suggested that Halifax “had felt it necessary to give friendly warning since there is all the difference between the problem of raw materials and what is popularly understood by colonial question.”²⁰⁸ At the same time, the Polish minister found unexpected allies. In mid-March, Georges Bonnet, informed that Beck’s colonial demands continued to appear in internationalist form.²⁰⁹ He also asked Halifax to offer Beck a couple of colonial assurances to keep Poland in the Western camp.²¹⁰ Moreover, one of the leaders of Britain’s Labor Party, Hugh Dalton, suggested during a debate in the House of Commons that “if we are to make concessions about colonies and exits for trade or emigration to foreign countries on the Continent, why not begin by making them to people like the Poles, who in contradistinction to the Germans and Italians, are not adopting a menacing attitude towards this country or its friends?” “If some concessions could be made to Poland,”

²⁰⁶ “Viscount Halifax to Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw),” March 8, 1939, 205, doc. 189, DBFP 1919-1939 3/IV.

²⁰⁷ Michał Łubieński, “Telegram szefowy dyrektora Gabinetu Ministra Spraw Zagranicznych do ambasady w Londynie o rozmowach z brytyjskim chargé d’affaires,” March 12, 1939, 147, doc. 78, PDD 1939/I.

²⁰⁸ “Sir H. Kennard (Warsaw) to Viscount Halifax,” March 10, 1939, 217.

²⁰⁹ “Léon Noël to Georges Bonnet,” March 15, 1939, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

²¹⁰ “Georges Bonnet to Charles Corbin,” March 13, 1939, 106CPCOM/421, Série Z-Europe (Pologne), Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

continued Dalton, “others might behave themselves rather better in the hope of getting such concessions for themselves later.”²¹¹

Notwithstanding this support, Halifax did not give Beck any satisfaction in the colonial realm. Instead, the bilateral defense treaty between the two countries not only boosted Poland’s security but also marked its clear return to the Western camp. Still, in July 1939 Noël complained to Szembek about a LMiK propaganda footage shown in a Warsaw movie theater, in which the image of a hand pointing to the map with British and French colonies in Africa appeared.²¹² In effect, however, the LMiK’s colonial propaganda lessened: in May 1939, Edward Raczyński underlined the advisability of keeping it completely constrained to unofficial messages outlining what the government viewed as Poland’s demographic-economic problem and absolutely discouraged any calls for political colonies.²¹³ In the meantime, moreover, the French embassy in Rome noted an adequate change in Italy’s attitude, which was now using friendly assessments of Polish colonial ambitions as a carrot to lure Poland back toward the Axis.²¹⁴ Naturally, the German attitude toward Poland’s colonial aspirations changed, too, especially after Beck’s ultimate rejection of Hitler’s demands in a fiery speech at the Sejm on May 5, 1939, which, according to Biddle, constituted the Führer’s failure to compromise Poland in the eyes of the West.²¹⁵ In a long memorandum, the Reich Main Security Office (*Sicherheitshauptamt*) warned against Poland’s colonial expansion, and especially against its industrial potential if powered with colonial raw materials. It was recommended that German newspapers present the Polish ambitions as irrational,

²¹¹ Hugh Dalton, “Statement in the House of Commons,” March 15, 1939, 345/544, Hansard’s House of Commons Debates.

²¹² Jan Szembek, “Rozmowa z Noëlem,” July 8, 1939, 660, *Diariusz IV*.

²¹³ “Edward Raczyński to the LMiK,” May 10, 1939, 2/322/9849, MSZ, AAN.

²¹⁴ “Embassy in Rome to Georges Bonnet,” April 20, 1939, 106CPCOM/421, Série Z-Europe (Pologne), Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

²¹⁵ Anthony Drexel Biddle, “Memorandum for President Franklin D. Roosevelt,” May 6, 1939, Poland, April-June 1939, Box 47, President’s Secretary’s File, FDRPL.

wishful thinking.²¹⁶ One month later, Hitler's sidelined predecessor, Franz von Papen, tried to assure Jan Szembek that Gdańsk had a secondary meaning to the Reich and that Berlin still hoped for colonial appeasement instead.²¹⁷ Warsaw no longer trusted the Germans, however.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined Beck's colonial agenda in Geneva as an attempt to address what his cabinet constructed as Poland's demographic-economic problem. The Polish minister proposed multilateral solutions to the contradictions inherent in a world order that seemed to be transitioning away from classical colonialism of metropolises and political dependencies. His fence-straddling between the Axis and Western camps that ensued from this approach made his efforts entirely futile, however. Western diplomats, unwilling to change the colonial status quo that protected the interests of their empires, refuted the Polish colonial demands in Geneva by associating them with their Axis analogues. By 1938, moreover, it became clear to the Brühl Palace that appeasement might happen at Poland's expense in both eastern Europe and Africa. The function of Beck's colonial agenda changed, with the Polish minister taking control of the LMiK and using its colonial propaganda to keep Hitler's attention distracted from Europe and to check the British designs to appease him. Beck did not wish to catapult Poland to a great-power status in Hitler's shadow, but attempted to maneuver in a confined space to ensure his state's survival. At the end of the day, however, Hitler overshadowed him in Geneva and beyond.

²¹⁶ "Polens Forderung nach Kolonien und der polnische Lebensraum," May 22, 1939, 15, R 104194, Referat Pol.V Polen, RZ 211 Politische Abteilung 1936-1945, PAAA.

²¹⁷ Jan Szembek, "Rozmowa z Papenem," June 27, 1939, 644, Diariusz IV.

Chapter 7

Emigration and the Jewish Question

“Oh, Madagascar, a black land, a humid land,
Africa that is half-wild.
Oh, Madagascar, bamboos and coconuts,
I might be happier among wild tribes,
Because culture means conflicts and fights.
Oh, Madagascar, my beloved land,
Long live the black land!”¹

Many scholars have argued that, because of religious and racial anti-Semitism, the Polish government camouflaged Jewish emigration projects as colonial projects.² This story is more complicated, however. In particular, over the course of the Madagascar project, which has become a synonym for Polish anti-Semitism, members of the colonial milieu drew on an entire spectrum of colonial, humanitarian, and technocratic language that justified anti-Semitic projects of emigration regardless of their intention. It is therefore necessary to reexamine the role of Polish minority emigration policies, especially toward Jews, in the presentation and execution of Polish colonial agenda. This chapter undertakes the task of reconsidering the relationship between these two sets of policies and explores why, as the Nazi German empire annexed territory in Europe, the Brühl Palace separated one from the other.

Poland’s Minority Emigration Policies

It has already been established that Beck believed in a “Jewish” dimension of what his cabinet constructed as Poland’s demographic-economic problem. In the opinion of the Brühl

¹ Mieczysław Miksne, *Madagaskar* (Warsaw: Syrena-Record, 1938). Translated from Stanisław Wielanek, ed., *Szlagiery starej Warszawy: śpiewnik andrusowski* (Warsaw: Boston, 1994), 162.

² See Joseph Marcus, *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919-1939* (New York: Mouton Publishers, 1983), 393; Tara Zahra, *The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2016), 150; Laurence Weinbaum, *A Marriage of Convenience: The New Zionist Organization and the Polish Government 1936-1939* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 114–15.

Palace, since both emigration outlets and raw materials could be found in colonial territories, the “solution” to both “problems” should be colonial. Furthermore, Britain’s lowering of Jewish immigration quotas for Palestine, stemming from Jewish-Arab tensions, was a major reason for Beck’s demand for Poland to be allowed to participate in the Permanent Mandates Commission: the Polish minister certainly hoped that London could be pressured to change its regional nationality policy in favor of Jewish emigration.³ Indeed, Warsaw used the closing of Palestine to mass immigration as its official justification for singling out Jews. At the end of 1936, the Brühl Palace issued a proposal of a resolution that it wished the government to pass, in which the Jewish-Arab riots in Jaffa figured as the major reason for the state’s need to participate in increasing Jewish emigration from Poland, especially from the Łódź, Białystok, Lublin, and Polesie provinces.⁴ At the same time, however, it was also the Polish government’s authoritarian tilt under the “colonels” that encouraged a “special” treatment of the minorities that, according to the 1931 census, collectively constituted around 30% of the population.⁵

In May 1936, Poland’s left-leaning president Ignacy Mościcki and right-leaning marshal Edward Rydz-Śmigły agreed to form a compromise government under Felicjan Sławoj Składkowski that lasted until the outbreak of World War II, effectively establishing a duopoly of power. In doing so, however, the two “colonels” had sidelined Walery Sławek, the leader of the Nonpartisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government who was originally expected to take over

³ Concerning the Arab revolts in Palestine, see, for example, D. K. Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958* (OUP Oxford, 2006); Matthew Hughes, “The Banality of Brutality: British Armed Forces and the Repression of the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936–39,” *The English Historical Review* 124, no. 507 (2009): 313–54; Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate* (Henry Holt and Company, 2013); Jacob Norris, “Repression and Rebellion: Britain’s Response to the Arab Revolt in Palestine of 1936–39,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 25–45.

⁴ “Notatka MSZ: Projekt uchwały Rady Ministrów na temat emigracji ludności żydowskiej z Polski,” n.d., 809–10, doc. 409, PDD 1936.

⁵ Jerzy Smoleński, *Zagadnienia demograficzne i ich znaczenie dla państwa* (Kraków: Jagiellonian University, 1937), 155.

after Piłsudski's death. After the consequent dissolution of the Bloc, the government required a new political support base. Rydz-Śmigły was quick to initiate one in order to consolidate his sphere of influence, which was under threat from Mościcki's ally, the successful economic minister Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski.⁶ Consequently, Rydz-Śmigły commissioned Colonel Adam Koc, long-time editor of *Gazeta Polska* and head of the national bank, to lead a new movement called the Camp of National Unity (*Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego*, or OZN). In his annunciation of its program delivered on February 21, 1937, Koc declared the greatness of the Polish state as the ideological axiom of the OZN. He argued that Poland's existence hinged on the existence of state structures, which had been the missing element of national life during the partitions: "The state is the nation's only correct and healthy form of life, giving the nation a strategy for greatness and a direction of its development. Therefore, there is no contradiction between the nation's interest and the state's interest."⁷

Despite this unification of the state and nation, however, Koc made an effort to separate Poland from totalitarian regimes. He pointed out that "tradition" dictated that Catholicism define the nation's nature, but also that other religions be tolerated in line with Poland's constitution.⁸ The state would allegedly respect the rights of minorities as long as they did not threaten its (Polish-Catholic) interests. While expressing understanding for "self-defense" against Jewish cultural and economic dominance during times of crisis, the program proclaimed that violence against Jews could not be sanctioned, since "acts of lawlessness (...) deprive a great nation of its

⁶ Antoni Czubiński, *Ewolucja systemu politycznego w Polsce w latach 1914-1998* (Poznań, 1999), 262–76; Grzegorz Kała, "Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego w wyborach do Sejmu i Senatu w 1938 roku," *Colloquium Wydziału Nauk Humanistycznych i Społecznych AMW*, no. 2 (2015): 7–45.

⁷ Adam Koc, "Deklaracja ideowo-polityczna wygłoszona dn. 21 b.m. przez pułk. Adama Koca," *Gazeta Polska*, February 22, 1937, 1.

⁸ Ibid.

dignity and honor.”⁹ Rejecting “communism and revolutionary methods,” Koc proposed a corporate model of economy in which the state served as a mediator between industry and labor unions. He assumed that migration to cities from the “overpopulated” countryside could take place after further industrial development and proposed integrating the agricultural sector through better management, education, and anti-parcellation measures.¹⁰ The French sociologist Gilbert Maroger justified Koc’s program by writing that Sanacja’s efforts to increase the state’s role in the economy was supposedly not explicitly anti-Semitic but that it nevertheless caused a decline in the importance of Jewish intermediaries. Moreover, according to him, the status of intermediaries declined as state-directed local credit unions and entrepreneurs replaced traditional commercial networks.¹¹ Emigration was not mentioned in Koc’s program as a “solution” to the purported demographic-economic problem, but the identification of Jews as an economically dominant “other” still implied that their disappearance was desirable.

Although Beck had found his way into the compromise government as an independent minister, the rhetoric of the OZN could only embolden the Brühl Palace and its program of separating the emigration of national minorities from the emigration of Polish Catholics. According to the Brühl Palace’s “Ten-Year Settlement Plan,” drafted in the first half of 1937, the Polish-Catholic “colonial emigration” was to continue flowing to the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland and to selected areas in Africa. Polish Catholics, however, were not to emigrate together with the minorities, since a “mixed settlement is always an arena of fights and conflicts transferred from the metropole, which disable the economic development of the colony

⁹ Ibid., 2.

¹⁰ Ibid., 1–2.

¹¹ Gilbert Maroger, *L’Europe et la question coloniale: Revendications coloniales allemandes, aspirations coloniales polonaises* (Librairie du reuil Sirey, 1938), 253–54.

and lower its moral position vis-à-vis local authorities and society.”¹² While separating Polish Catholics from the rest of the emigrant population, moreover, Warsaw distinguished between minorities: the “rule of dispersal” (*zasada rozproszenia*) was to be applied to non-Polish Slavs in South America (e.g. Ukrainians) while the “rule of territorial concentration” (*zasada koncentracji terytorialnej*) was to be applied to Jews in Palestine and in a “supplementary” territory.¹³ During a discussion in the Sejm’s Budget Commission on January 11, 1937, in response to a Jewish Orthodox representative named Lejb Mincberg, Beck found himself defending the “rule of territorial concentration” insofar as it applied to territories outside of Palestine. His statement was telling insofar as it suggested that searching for a supplementary territory was necessary not only because British Palestine did not welcome as many Jews as it had earlier but also to combat the impression that Jewish emigration was only a function of creating a “national home.” Instead, Beck wished the international community to understand that Jewish emigration was as much about what he considered to be Poland’s demographic-economic problem as it was about Zionism.¹⁴

In May 1937 the British ambassador Howard Kennard, observed that, unlike the Endecja, the government tried to encourage Jews to emigrate without resorting to measures intended to render their living conditions as unbearable as possible, which included banning Jews from entering skilled professions and boycotting their businesses.¹⁵ In August 1937, however, the Brühl Palace nonetheless stated in a confidential memorandum: “The objective of state policy must be the ensuring for the Polish element of not only a numerical advantage but also of an appropriate role in the country’s economic life.” In addition to the “socioeconomically flawed” Jewish masses,

¹² “Projekt 10 letniego planu osadniczego,” 1937, 2/322/9585, MSZ, AAN.

¹³ “Notatka dla Pana Ministra,” 1937, 4–5, 2/322/9585, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁴ Józef Beck, “Odpowiedź po dyskusji nad przemówieniem w Komisji Budżetowej Sejmu,” January 11, 1937, 297, Przemówienia.

¹⁵ “Howard William Kennard to Anthony Eden,” May 11, 1937, FO 371/20763/C3699, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

Belarussians had to emigrate because of their high reproduction rate and Ukrainians because they had been economically successful in the southeastern provinces and had adopted an “anti-state attitude.”¹⁶ Likewise, the emigration of Jews, described as a potentially dangerous communist “element,” from the provinces bordering the Soviet Union was considered important for the security of the state.¹⁷ Interestingly, the departure of Jews was not always encouraged in Polesie, where Jewish wealth was seen as a factor keeping the Ukrainians economically depressed.¹⁸ Nor was Jewish emigration to be channeled everywhere: the Interministerial Emigration Commission (MKE) recommended, for example, that it should be redirected away from Brazil, where their increased presence had resulted in ever more anti-Semitism and immigration restrictions, the latter of which worked against Polish colonial expansion.¹⁹ Likewise, in November 1937 the newly accredited Argentinian envoy to Warsaw, Rodolfo Freyre, told Ignacy Mościcki that, while Argentina would continue to welcome Polish immigration, its increasingly “Jewish” and therefore “communist” character was worrisome. Mościcki responded that Warsaw would search for other emigration outlets for Jews and that it would treat Argentina as a destination for non-Jewish farmers instead.²⁰

Warsaw did not always look for mere dumping grounds for the minorities, either, but determined the quality of potential emigration destinations in relation to its geopolitical aims. In December 1937, a member of the MKE stated that, in order to accomplish a “sort of separation of minorities from those settlement areas where the Polish element has established itself,” the foreign

¹⁶ “Przegląd informacyjny ‘Polska a Zagranica’ (fragment): problemy demograficzne i surowcowe Polski,” August 21, 1937, 550, doc. 212, PDD 1937.

¹⁷ “Emigracja żydowska a czynniki wojskowe,” January 1938, 2/322/9905, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁸ “Memoriał MSZ w sprawie emigracji żydowskiej z Polski,” 1936, 812, doc. 410, PDD 1936.

¹⁹ “Referat wygłoszony przez Przewodniczącego Międzyministerialnej Komisji Emigracyjnej na Konferencji w dniu 10.XII.1937 r.,” December 10, 1937, 3, 2/322/9898, MSZ, AAN.

²⁰ Jan Szembek, “Wręczenie listów uwierzytelniających przez posta argentyńskiego p. Rodolfo Freyre,” November 12, 1937, 175–77, Diariusz III.

ministry should ensure that any areas reserved for the minorities in Latin America “provide to the emigrants benefits that would lead to the rechanneling of their emigration away from the Argentinian-Brazilian direction.”²¹ The areas offered to Ukrainians, especially, had to be “most attractive” to deter them from settling in the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland reserved for Polish Catholics.²² Furthermore, the search for suitable emigration destinations for minorities was related to the efforts of consolidating smaller farms into larger and more efficient units in Poland’s eastern borderlands: the Ministry of Agriculture proposed targeting minority populations living close to parceled estates for emigration.²³ Refraining from reserving the most attractive areas in South America for Polish Catholics only was therefore necessary if the government hoped to persuade minorities to leave.²⁴

The selection of minorities for emigration was also dependent upon their level of “national consciousness”: while deeming the nationalist Ukrainians “lost” to the Polish nation, the authorities considered other Slavic minorities, for example the less “nationally conscious” “Ruthenians,” assimilable into Polish culture. It was therefore supposedly exigent to send these “nationally unconscious” Slavs to economically attractive Polish-Catholic settlements located, for example, in Chaparé, Bolivia.²⁵ For this reason, the argument went, the “colonies” originally intended for Catholics could also welcome Eastern Orthodox settlers. In 1937, for example, the Polish government and the British corporation “Parana Plantations” managed to recruit and transport 126 families, or 518 colonists, to a settlement called “Orle” in northern Paraná, which

²¹ “Referat wygłoszony przez Przewodniczącego Międzyministerialnej Komisji Emigracyjnej na Konferencji w dniu 10.XII.1937 r.,” 25.

²² *Ibid.*, 4.

²³ “Tajne. Zestawienie odpowiedzi Panów Ministrów,” February 1938, 2/322/9896, MSZ, AAN.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 6–8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*; Romuald Nowicki, “Notatka w sprawie umowy polsko-boliwijskiej,” January 17, 1938, 2, 2/322/9542, MSZ, AAN.

had been originally envisioned as a Polish “reservation” (*rezerwat*). The MKE was generally pleased with the situation in “Orle” but identified nearly half of the colonists as Eastern Orthodox.²⁶ Likewise, in January 1938, a trusted source of the consulate in Curitiba reported that a settlement called “São Miguel,” located in the municipality of Joaquim Távora in northern Paraná, housed 300 families, mostly Ukrainian. Despite occasional anti-Polish agitation, however, most of the Ukrainian colonists used the Polish language: they borrowed books, took lessons, and participated in discussions.²⁷ Another mixed Catholic-Orthodox center existed in the municipality of Santa Rosa, Rio Grande do Sul, where a foreign partnership called “Dahne Conceição et Cia” was operating a concession in cooperation with the Polish government. In the years 1936-1937, the “Dahne Conceição” installed nearly two thousand emigrants from Poland in Santa Rosa, many of them Eastern Orthodox.²⁸

While opportunities existed for Slavic minorities to remain viewed by the government as useful members of the Polish nation and to settle in economically attractive areas overseas, the situation of the Jews was more precarious. In the first place, the Polish state continued to underline their “socioeconomic flaw” in public discourse, setting them ever more apart from non-Jews. In a statement delivered on the radio on February 21, 1938, the new leader of the OZN, Gen. Stanisław Skwarczyński, now incorporated the “colonial” and “Jewish” matters into the movement’s program that had been announced exactly one year earlier. After encouraging supporters to join the LMiK and fight for Poland’s access to emigration outlets and raw materials, Skwarczyński stated that Jews constituted “an obstacle to the course of normal evolution of the masses of the

²⁶ “Nr 53,” 1935, 53, 2/322/9577, MSZ, AAN; “Referat wygłoszony przez Przewodniczącego Międzyministerialnej Komisji Emigracyjnej na Konferencji w dniu 10.XII.1937 r.,” 12–14.

²⁷ “Sprawozdanie o kolonizacji polskiej w municypium Joaquim Távora,” January 14, 1938, 2/322/9804, MSZ, AAN.

²⁸ “Referat wygłoszony przez Przewodniczącego Międzyministerialnej Komisji Emigracyjnej na Konferencji w dniu 10.XII.1937 r.,” 11–12.

Polish nation,” which, while not warranting “any demagoguery and inappropriate terroristic action in respect to Jews,” had to result in “a radical reduction of the number of Jews in Poland” through emigration nevertheless.²⁹ Assimilation was out of the question, except for a couple of individuals whom the Polish state could still preserve for the “nation” (*naród*), which it distinguished from the stateless and more amorphous minority “nationalities” (*narodowości*). Instead, the OZN compared Polish-Jewish ghettos to British colonial outposts overseas and argued that it was only through emigration that these communities could avoid further alienation and impoverishment.³⁰ Describing Skwarczyński’s program, the Polish-language Jewish newspaper *Nasz Przegląd* wrote ironically that “no political banner features so many good wishes or paints a picture representing so beautifully the gates of paradise.”³¹

In this manner, between the fall of 1936 and spring of 1938, the Polish government had officially proclaimed its desire to orchestrate a mass Jewish emigration not only in Geneva but also in Poland, in public utterances such as radio broadcasts. Setting Jews apart from Christians based upon their alleged “urban” and sometimes “communist” nature, however, also occurred in South America and other places that could potentially accommodate immigration. Warsaw therefore wished to address the contradiction inherent its double-edged-sword claim of the “socioeconomic flaw,” since it was aware that depicting Jews as “urban” could feed into foreign anti-Jewish sentiments and dissuade foreign leaders from opening their borders to Jews. In consequence, Beck’s diplomats attempted to square the “urban” nature of Jews with their fitness for settlement in agricultural settings. In September 1936, for example, the Polish ambassador in London Edward Raczyński expressed his opposition to the British restriction of Polish-Jewish

²⁹ Stanisław Skwarczyński, “Wobec ogromu pracy-konieczność dyscypliny,” *Gazeta Polska*, February 22, 1938, 2.

³⁰ *Wytoczne polityki narodowościowej. Część I. Sprawa żydowska* (Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego, 1938), 27–28.

³¹ Regnis, “System planetarny,” *Nasz Przegląd*, February 26, 1938.

immigration into Palestine in a conversation with the British diplomat Robert Vansittart, arguing that Poland's Jews offered that mandate the "most valuable elements for pioneering and settlement purposes."³² This was a colonial propaganda feature that changed little with time. According to a Brühl Palace memorandum from May 1938, for example, members of the conservative Agudas Israel party, a "morally and socially healthy element," constituted about 60% of all Polish Jews³³ The foreign ministry also referenced Jan Czekanowski to argue that many Polish Jews had acquired physiological traits from their Christian neighbors that allowed them to serve as excellent pioneers in Argentina and Palestine.³⁴ Moreover, the Polish state supported more than 500 Jewish agricultural training camps, run under the auspices of different Jewish parties and enrolling almost 19,000 members.³⁵

It was not only in South America and Palestine that, according to Polish leaders, Jewish "pioneers" could settle, but also in Africa. In 1937, the LMiK's Stanisław Pawłowski worked to dispel any "doubts as to whether Jews are at all fit for heavy physical labor and whether one could even speak of permanent Jewish settlements in any area (...)." ³⁶ He made a call to acknowledge particular Jewish traits that made their migration especially easy, which supposedly included unique religious and tribal solidarity, linguistic and cultural erudition, and the ability to acclimate to both moderate and subtropical climates. In effect, Pawłowski described Jews as a mercurial people that had migrated for thousands of years to the farthest ends of the globe. He alleged that, until 1933, Jews had preferred to migrate to countries other than Palestine and that only increasing

³² Edward Raczyński, "Raport ambasadora w Londynie o rozmowie ze stałym podsekreterzem stanu w MSZ Wielkiej Brytanii," September 10, 1936, 553, doc. 279, PDD 1936.

³³ "Notatka w sprawie wartości imigracji żydowskiej z Polski," May 1938, 2, 65010/12.10, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

³⁴ Ibid., 3.

³⁵ Ibid., 6.

³⁶ Stanisław Pawłowski, *O emigracji Żydów z Polski i o ich kolonizacji* (Warsaw: Liga Morska i Kolonialna, 1937), 30.

immigration quotas in South America encouraged them to choose the “national home.”³⁷ According to Pawłowski, Jews had been historically present in North Africa, had migrated to South Africa, and had also considered Uganda, Kenya, and Angola as potential emigration destinations.³⁸ The LMiK should, he went on, therefore promote Jewish settlement not only in Palestine but also in those countries through the selection of “young and productive” Jews, to whom farming courses and propaganda film screenings would be addressed.³⁹ Pawłowski was not wrong in his simultaneously anti-Semitic claim that Jews themselves had considered and sometimes settled in places in Africa. Indeed, in its campaign to market Jews as pioneers, which was nested in its broader efforts to facilitate their emigration to Palestine and to another “supplementary territory,” the Polish government entered into a series of strange alliances.

Warsaw’s Strange Alliances

Just as the question of Jewish emigration was constructed as a major concern for the Polish government in 1936, it also determined the divisions on the Jewish political scene in the country. Both the left-leaning Zionists associated with the World Zionist Organization and the right-wing (Revisionist) Zionists supported emigration to Palestine, although the latter advocated more radical ways of fighting for its independence. The Orthodox party Agudas Israel also supported Zionism, at least as long as it respected Jewish religious traditions. In contrast, the radical-democratic Folkists and the anti-Zionist socialist Bund wished to keep Jews in Poland.⁴⁰ While the non-Zionists opposed Jewish emigration from Poland on principle, the Polish government did not receive much support from the mainstream Zionists, either. One of the first Jewish responses to

³⁷ Ibid., 5–20.

³⁸ Ibid., 35–36.

³⁹ Ibid., 63.

⁴⁰ “Główne organizacje żydowskie polityczne i społeczne,” 1937, 1–2, I.303.4.5745, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego, CAW WBH.

Beck's pronouncements in Geneva came from the Polish-language Jewish daily with Zionist leanings, *Nasz Przegląd*, on September 25, 1936, with a certain "S.H" underlining that "as Polish citizens, we the Jews, no less than non-Jewish citizens, desire the enlargement of Polish territory, also through colonial expansion." The author cited the opinion of Polish-Catholic conservatives that African colonies, themselves often suffering from a surplus of labor and dearth of capital, would not welcome new settlers due to opposition from their Western metropolises. He therefore considered the inclusion of what was termed the Jewish Question in Poland's colonial agenda as a nod to anti-Semites.⁴¹ Half a year later "S.H." would likewise argue that mass Jewish emigration was simply not possible under current circumstances, that Poland could not finance it, and that singling out groups for departure created nothing positive. At the same time, in a critique of autarchy, the author also suggested that a degree of agricultural and industrial progress could be achieved through free trade and further reform.⁴²

In response to this sort of critique, an editorial from the October 10, 1936 issue of the official government newspaper *Polska Zbrojna* selectively quoted a number of Jewish leaders whose statements seemed to suggest their belief in the Polish-Jewish "socioeconomic flow." The Polish-Jewish radical Zionist leader Yitzhak Gruenbaum (Izaak Grünbaum), for example, was referenced as saying: "In Poland, an ennoblement (*nobilitacja*) of the bazaar is taking place... so we must leave. The hour of exodus has struck for the great Jewish masses. This emigration could not be stopped even if a government of workers and peasants came to power in Poland."⁴³ In a similar manner, the left-wing Jewish refugee activist Aryeh Tartakower was quoted as stating that Jewish emigration stemmed not only from anti-Semitic propaganda but also from the "iron rules

⁴¹ S.H., "Kolonie, mandaty a... żydzi," *Nasz Przegląd*, September 25, 1936.

⁴² S.H., "Kolonizacja i Emigracja," *Nasz Przegląd*, January 14, 1937, 3.

⁴³ "Żydzi o emigracji," *Polska Zbrojna*, October 10, 1936, 1.

of economic development” that national governments could not fully control.⁴⁴ Having quoted these statements, the editorial expressed the hope that, since Jews themselves allegedly complained in the international forum about the closing of emigration outlets, both sides would reach a mutually beneficial agreement.⁴⁵ The agreement with moderate Zionists did not quite materialize, however, and on October 12, 1936, the World Jewish Congress expressed its readiness to support pressuring the countries in South America and elsewhere to lower their immigration quotas, but only as long as the rights of Jews in the sending countries remained intact, implying that Jews should not be singled out for departure.⁴⁶ Ironically, radical Polish anti-Semites, too, pressured the Polish government to disentangle the Colonial from the Jewish Question, with one of these extreme right-wingers arguing in *ABC—Nowiny Codzienne* that “Poland’s acquisition of colonies might either mean annexing lands for Polish economic expansion and for partly getting rid of the Jewish element, or annexing lands for Jewish economic expansion and for partly getting rid of the Polish element.”⁴⁷

Beck’s placement of what his cabinet constructed as Poland’s Jewish Question in a colonial context received more mixed responses from the right-wing New Zionist Organization (NZO) under the leadership of Vladimir Jabotinsky, which promoted a radical path to an independent Jewish state in Palestine, opposing mainstream Zionism as too socialistic, too diplomatic toward the British authorities in Palestine, and too peaceful toward Arabs. (Figure 1) Much has been written about the Revisionist Zionists, who enjoyed the greatest following in eastern Europe, and about their relationship with the Polish government. Laurence Weinbaum, for example, has called

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Wiktor Skiński, “Okólnik Wydziału Prasowego w sprawie emigracji z Polski,” November 7, 1936, 661, doc. 338, PDD 1936.

⁴⁷ “Polemika,” *ABC—Nowiny Codzienne*, September 24, 1936, 3.

it a “marriage of convenience,” given the compatibility between the former’s efforts to increase Jewish emigration and the latter’s “evacuation plan.” Weinbaum has underlined, moreover, the



Figure 1. Vladimir Jabotinsky in Warsaw, speaking at a Revisionist Zionist congress (1930). His Zionist grouping supported increased Jewish emigration from Poland, but only to Palestine. Source: NAC 1-P-2363.

military aid that Betar, the Revisionist Zionist military wing in Poland, as well as Irgun, its more radical splinter cell in Palestine, received from Warsaw, suggesting that Jabotinsky’s Polish connections played a large role in the formation of modern Israel. In turn, the Revisionist Zionist attitude toward Poland’s role in Palestine encouraged the Polish government to view the British mandate from a colonial perspective.⁴⁸

In the first place, Jabotinsky and his followers supported Poland’s right to join the Permanent Mandate Commission. In November 1936, in a memorandum submitted to Michał Łubieński, the NZO argued that Warsaw should have a decision-making position in the affairs of Palestine because Polish Jews constituted the British mandate’s largest immigrant group and had made important economic contributions to the country.⁴⁹ This memorandum was reflective of the Revisionist Zionist desire for a mass Jewish emigration from Poland discussed in Weinbaum’s work, which was welcomed at the Brühl Palace.⁵⁰ During a press interview, Jabotinsky stated that 75,000 Jews should leave Poland annually.⁵¹ In one of his books,

⁴⁸ Weinbaum, *A Marriage of Convenience*. More recently, Daniel Heller has critically examined the ideological affinities between Revisionist Zionism and Piłsudskiite ideology, pointing out that Jabotinsky’s ever-changing and unique authoritarian worldview resulted as much from a web of interactions between his followers in Poland and Palestine. See Daniel Kupfert Heller, *Jabotinsky’s Children: Polish Jews and the Rise of Right-Wing Zionism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

⁴⁹ New Zionist Organization, “Polska i Komisja Królewska,” November 1936, 2/322/2291, MSZ, AAN.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Roman Piotrowicz, *Sprawa Palestyny*, 1937, 251–69.

⁵¹ Skiński, “Okólnik Wydziału Prasowego w sprawie emigracji z Polski,” 658.

the Revisionist leader expressed a fatalistic opinion of the Polish responses to the economic conflicts with Jews in the cities: “I consider the human trait of sacrificing the ‘alien’ for one’s ‘own’ as a dynamic constituent part of the world order, [normal] as frost is in winter and hotness in summer.”⁵² Furthermore, the NZO agreed with the Polish anti-Semitic thesis that Jews constituted an “urban nation” in transition from petty merchants and artisans into farmers and pioneers. Nevertheless, the Revisionists believed that such a transition required not only a long time and large capital but also a “national idea” that only Palestine could sustain. It was for this reason that Jabotinsky and his followers considered the initiatives to channel Jewish emigration outside of Palestine as unrealistic and called them “Fata Morganas” (mirages) that distracted Jews from the “national home.”⁵³ The Revisionist opposition to territories other than Palestine, in turn, encouraged Warsaw not to limit itself to an exclusive cooperation with the NZO.⁵⁴

In contrast to the NZO, two smaller international Jewish groups shared the Polish desire to find emigration outlets beyond Palestine for Jews. One of them, the Jewish Colonization Association, had been established in 1891 and carried out Jewish settlement in Argentina, Brazil, and Canada under the leadership of Baron Moritz von Hirsch. The other group, known as the Territorialists, functioned in the framework of a league called Freeland and looked to create a second Jewish “national home” to supplement Palestine, where Jews would enjoy territorial and cultural autonomy. In the years 1911-1912, the original “Jewish Territorialist Organization” under the leadership of Isaac Zangwill had put forward a project of Jewish mass emigration to Angola, subsequently discussed in the Portuguese parliament and based upon an even earlier, nineteenth-

⁵² Włodzimierz Żabotyński, *Państwo żydowskie* (Warsaw: Renaissance, 1937), 43.

⁵³ “Czy istnieją możliwości masowej kolonizacji żydowskiej poza Palestyną?” (New Zionist Organization, 1937), 65010/12.9, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

⁵⁴ “Referat w sprawie ustosunkowania się władz państwowych do ruchu neo-syjonistów/syjonistów-rewizjonistów/reprezentowanego przez Żabotyńskiego,” 1937, I.303.4.5745, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego, CAW WBH.

century project by the Alliance Israélite Universelle.⁵⁵ In the 1930s, however, the leading destination of Territorialist emigration was the Jewish Autonomous Oblast of Birobidzhan in the Russian Far East.⁵⁶ Mieczysław Lepecki suggested at the time that Moscow's reason for resettling Soviet Jews to Birobidzhan stemmed from the "Leninist theory about nations packed into national forms with communist content," or the idea that, in order to reach communism, the Soviets first required to drag their peoples to modernity, which they associated with the nation-state.⁵⁷ According to Lepecki, however, Birobidzhan could also be a "bluff" and an instrument of anti-Zionist propaganda, but with an area of 38,152 km², larger than Belgium's and home to a population of 63,000 only, the oblast could potentially serve as an outlet for Jewish emigration from Poland.⁵⁸ According to Drymmer, the Brühl Palace stopped considering Birobidzhan after finding out that it was simply a "place of exile" for Jews,⁵⁹ but the real reason behind the abandoning of that "emigration destination" was probably more pragmatic and related to the worsening relations with the Soviet Union during the Great Purges of 1937.

Until the end of 1937, the search for "supplementary territories" or "new settlement areas" for Jews still seemed less important to Warsaw than securing emigration to Palestine. Instead, the Polish government was focused on responding to the Peel Commission (November 1936–July 1937), which investigated the causes of the Arab rebellion in Palestine and ultimately proposed a partition plan of the British mandate. In April 1937, Edward Raczyński discussed the matter with the president of the World Zionist Organization, Chaim Weizmann, and the Revisionist

⁵⁵ "Marian Szumlakowski to Apoloniusz Zarychta," February 5, 1934, 2/322/10222, MSZ, AAN.

⁵⁶ "Główne organizacje żydowskie polityczne i społeczne," 7.

⁵⁷ Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, *Birobidżan. Żydowski Obwód Autonomiczny w ZSRR* (Warsaw: Związek Pisarzy i Publicystów Emigracyjnych, 1937), 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 4, 32, 41.

⁵⁹ Wiktor Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce: wspomnienia żołnierza i państwowca z lat 1914-1947* (Kraków: Wingert, 2014), 206–7.

representative named Benjamin Akzin. The Polish ambassador reported that Akzin was negatively disposed toward the British partition plan as it did not grant Jews the right to all of Palestine.⁶⁰ Raczynski communicated, moreover, that Jabotinsky was worried that turning the British mandate into an abridged dominion would curtail the political role of the NZO.⁶¹ In June, Aleksander Łubieński told another leader of the World Zionist congress, Yitzhak Gruenbaum (Grynbaum), that his government expressed its resolve to fight any scheme that limited the possibility of Jewish emigration to Palestine.⁶² One month later, once the partition plan was announced, Łubieński communicated that Poland's stance was not principled and would depend upon the resulting change in immigration quotas.⁶³ Most importantly, however, by September Beck told Weizmann in Geneva that Warsaw would refrain from putting forward proposals for "new settlement areas" while Palestine's fate was decided.⁶⁴ In response, Weizmann claimed that his opposition to Jewish settlement projects outside of Palestine was not ideological but practical.⁶⁵ At the end, the partition plan was not implemented due to Jewish and especially Arab opposition. In effect, the British quotas for Jewish immigration into Palestine remained low, but the episode showed that Beck was willing to underline the primacy of the "national home" in Polish emigration policy as long as there was a chance of affecting British decisions.

Starting in late 1937, Warsaw not only channeled its efforts to increase immigration quotas for traditional Jewish destinations such as Palestine and the United States but also reacted

⁶⁰ Edward Raczynski, "Raport ambasadora w Londynie na temat stanowiska brytyjskiego w sprawie Palestyny," April 17, 1937, 237, doc. 88, PDD 1937.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Michał Łubieński, "Notatka dyrektora Gabinetu Ministra Spraw Zagranicznych z rozmowy z politykiem syjonistycznym na temat Palestyny," June 7, 1937, 375, doc. 139, PDD 1937.

⁶³ Michał Łubieński, "Pismo dyrektora Gabinetu Ministra Spraw Zagranicznych do posła w Rydze w sprawie emigracji ludności żydowskiej z Polski do Palestyny," July 1937, 495–97, doc. 190, PDD 1937.

⁶⁴ "Niepodpisana notatka z rozmowy ministra spraw zagranicznych z przewodniczącym Światowej Organizacji Syjonistycznej," September 12, 1937, 577–78, doc. 223, PDD 1937.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 578.

whenever the West sent signals that “supplementary territories” might be found in Africa. It has already been shown that Beck’s diplomatic efforts to negotiate for colonial concessions internationally turned into all but a function of foreign policy as the authority of the League of Nations declined in 1938. The Brühl Palace’s more particular efforts to negotiate for colonial “emigration outlets” for Jews, both bilaterally and multilaterally, followed a somewhat different trajectory.

Negotiations for Jewish “Supplementary Territories” in Africa

In its search for “supplementary territories,” Warsaw found an ally in Washington, whose relative lack of colonial interests in Africa made it the only great power capable of looking at the Polish plans from a distance. Already in October 1936, Beck attempted to convince the U.S. leadership into pressuring Britain to accept more Jews, not only into Palestine but also into east African colonies like Kenya.⁶⁶ One year later, Franklin D. Roosevelt himself broached the topic of Jewish emigration with the Polish ambassador Józef Potocki, attacking the British for delaying the partitioning of Palestine and thus causing problems for Jews trying to emigrate from Europe. After suggesting that about 100,000 Jews should leave Poland annually, Roosevelt pointed out that South America was likewise a potential “emigration destination” and offered his personal assistance in facilitating Jewish departure to both places.⁶⁷ In January 1938, the U.S. president was pleased with the Polish approach to what the note from the conversation referred to as the Jewish Question, noting that it did not follow Romania’s imitation of the Nazi methods of violently forcing Jewish emigration. Once again, Roosevelt suggested that ways to sponsor Jewish emigration to Palestine,

⁶⁶ Tytus Komarnicki, “Tajny telegram o dyskusji dotyczącej problemu populacyjno-emigracyjnego na XVII-em Zgromadzeniu Ligi Narodów,” October 12, 1936, 45015/68.11, Ambasada (United States), HILA.

⁶⁷ Jerzy Potocki, “Raport ambasadora w Waszyngtonie: rozmowa z prezydentem USA,” October 21, 1937, 632–33, doc. 241, PDD 1937.

South America, and South Africa could be found.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the Polish socioeconomic justification of Jewish emigration found a large number of apologists among influential U.S. public figures. The journalist Dorothy Thompson, for example, wrote that “Polish Jews would be much healthier standing on their own feet in a new country instead of staying in Poland and making each of their babies a potential candidate for charity from relatives of Jewish organizations abroad.”⁶⁹ Before Warsaw could take advantage of Washington’s backing, however, on March 12, 1938 German troops marched into Austria, resulting in an exodus of Jews from the annexed country.

The Polish government, fearing that a Jewish *immigration* of refugees into Poland would cancel out any Jewish *emigration*, decided to react to the *Anschluss*. Targeting Austrian and German Jews with Polish passports, at the end of March the Sejm passed a law stripping its nationals of citizenship if they had, since November 1918, lived abroad for longer than five years and failed to show any signs of “connection” to the Polish state.⁷⁰ In effect, Jewish refugees began moving across different European states, none of which wished to accept them but instead engaged in a legislative tug-of-war. In May 1938, for example, Edward Ligocki from the *IKC* reported sarcastically that many Jewish refugees from Vienna had “reminded themselves that they are Poles” and “stormed” the Polish consulate in Paris as a result of a French decree asking all foreigners to regulate their legal status within days.⁷¹ In reaction to this refugee crisis, which was aided by anti-Semitism across Europe, an international conference was scheduled to convene in Évian-les-Bains, France at Roosevelt’s initiative in the first half of July 1938. In consequence, Beck announced that Poland would like to participate, hoping that the conference would treat

⁶⁸ Jan Szembek, “Jerzy Potocki to Józef Beck,” January 21, 1938, 59037/2.6, Delegacja przy Lidze Narodów Telegrams, HILA.

⁶⁹ Dorothy Thompson, *Refugees; Anarchy or Organization?* (New York: Random House, 1938), 72.

⁷⁰ Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce*, 204.

⁷¹ Edward Ligocki, “Szturm na konsulat Polski w Paryżu,” *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, May 19, 1938, 3.

Jewish emigration as a “comprehensive question,” not just as a matter of refugees.⁷² Soon, however, Polish diplomats learned that only Jews leaving their countries *involuntarily* would receive international assistance.⁷³ In fact, Roosevelt did not officially invite Poland to attend “as it was not a country which could receive refugees” and he believed that Poland’s alleged need for emigration outlets, as opposed to sanctioned anti-Semitic violence and expulsion, could be best dealt with by the International Labor Bureau.⁷⁴ Ironically, despite its own controversial citizenship law, Poland still behaved too well in comparison to Nazi Germany to be allowed to join the negotiating table.

Warsaw followed the proceedings of the Évian Conference nonetheless, looking out for any emigration propositions that might encompass Polish Jews in the future. In fact, already in late June 1938 the Territorialist Freeland, a rather fringe league of idealist Jewish intellectuals, submitted a petition to the chairman and delegates of the impending conference to solicit the search for “another [in addition to Palestine] large territory for close settlement,” underlining that it should be “otherwise uninhabited or scarcely populated so as to avoid competition with the native population,” and that Jewish colonists, imagined as having no political aspirations, would become citizens of the state granting the territory.⁷⁵ Moreover, during the first meeting of the Évian conference on July 6, the British representative, Lord Winterton, announced that London considered opening certain territories in East Africa to a small number of Jewish refugee families, although the matter was complicated by “considerations of climate, or race, and of political

⁷² “Telegram from Józef Beck to the Embassy in Paris,” June 3, 1938, 45004/18.5, Ambasada (France), HILA.

⁷³ “Nr E.I.287-1/42 to Edward Raczyński,” July 29, 1938, 45015/65.3, Ambasada (United States), HILA.

⁷⁴ Raymond Leslie Buell, *Poland. Key to Europe* (New York: Knopf, 1939), 226–27.

⁷⁵ Charles D. Seligman, L. Kessler, and I. Steinberg, “League for Jewish Territorial Colonization ‘Freeland’ to the Chairman and Delegates of the Conference for Refugees in Evian,” June 24, 1938, 7, Evian Intergovernmental Committee Conference (folder 1), June–November 1938, Myron C. Taylor Papers, FDRPL.

development.”⁷⁶ Consequently, at the end of August, Beck pointed out to the British ambassador Kennard that the “healthy idea of searching for a débouché for emigration outside of Palestine starts to germinate in Jewish society.”⁷⁷ Disregarding the anti-Semitic violence in Romania, Warsaw also proposed campaigning for Jewish emigration outlets together with Bucharest, initiating a lasting diplomatic alliance in the matter.⁷⁸ All of this resulted in disappointment to the Poles, however, for the Évian Conference did not implement any colonial solutions to the Jewish refugee crisis but only morphed into the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (ICR) based in London.

It took another set of events to create more auspicious circumstances for the Brühl Palace’s negotiations for “supplementary territories.” The Polish citizenship law of March 1938 had set October 29 as the deadline for petitioners wishing to renew their passports by filing applications in local Polish consulates. Assuming that most of the Polish Jews in question would not have their passports renewed, however, the Nazi leadership in Berlin initiated the *Polenaktion* of October 26, during which the Germans managed to deport about 17,000 of these Polish citizens to the border; a number that would have been higher were it not for the efforts of the Polish consul in Leipzig, Feliks Chiczewski, to shelter Jews in his consular building.⁷⁹ The humanitarian crisis at the hastily constructed refugee camp of Zbąszyń at the border crossing attracted a degree of sympathy for Warsaw’s emigration cause in Washington. At the end of October, Jerzy Potocki received reports

⁷⁶ “Intergovernmental Committee. Evian - Jul 1938. Verbatim Report of the First Meeting (Public). Speech by Lord Winterton (United Kingdom),” July 6, 1938, 4, Evian Intergovernmental Committee Conference, July 1938, Myron C. Taylor Papers, FDRPL.

⁷⁷ “Niepodpisana notatka z rozmowy ministra spraw zagranicznych z ambasadorem Wielkiej Brytanii,” August 28, 1936, 530, doc. 267, PDD 1936.

⁷⁸ “Aide memoire w sprawie żydowskiej dyktowane przez Pana Ministra - dla złożenia przez Ambasadora Raczyńskiego królowi Rumuńskiemu,” July 17, 1938, 45015/65.3, Ambasada (United States), HILA.

⁷⁹ “State Government of Saxony to Wilhelmstrasse,” November 28, 1938, R 104250, Referat Pol.V Polen, RZ 211 Politische Abteilung 1936-1945, PAAA.

that Jewish-Americans wished to encourage Poland to lay a claim to Angola in the context of British-German negotiations concerning a potential colonial appeasement.⁸⁰ In reaction, on November 7, Jan Szembek telegraphed the Polish ambassador: "I would like to ask you not to commit yourself in any discussions whatsoever as regards this or that specific colonial territory for Poland in connection to the Jewish question."⁸¹ He remarked that instead it was desirable that "serious" Jews themselves put forward specific proposals.⁸²

In fact, Potocki was soon invited to a meeting with a group of Jewish-American financiers, during which representatives of the Jewish-American Joint Distribution Committee allegedly praised Poland for what they described as a non-violent and humanitarian approach to the Jewish Question and for its refrain from emulating brutal German methods. They agreed with the Polish ambassador that open attempts to create a second Jewish "national home" outside of Palestine would only elicit negative Jewish responses worldwide. In turn, they suggested that only Poland's success in acquiring colonies could result in a "supplementary territory" for Jews.⁸³ More practically, sponsors of the Joint Distribution Committee such as Bernard Baruch and Myron Taylor offered their financial assistance in purchasing a part of Portuguese territory in Africa and placing it in fiscal union with Poland; Roosevelt was supposedly interested, too.⁸⁴ Potocki considered this plan "interesting" and aimed at fulfilling Poland's colonial aspirations.⁸⁵ Still, Beck instructed him that Jews themselves should first win over the U.S. and British governments to the

⁸⁰ "Jerzy Potocki to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," October 29, 1938, 2/322/9915, MSZ, AAN.

⁸¹ Jan Szembek, "Instruction of the Under Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Washington: Polish Government's Position in the Matter of Colonies and Jewish Emigration from Poland," November 7, 1938, 20, doc. 8, PDFP 1938/1939.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 21.

⁸³ "Jerzy Potocki to Józef Beck," November 17, 1938, 1–3, 2/322/9913, MSZ, AAN.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*; "Notatka," November 1938, 2/322/9915, MSZ, AAN; "Telegram from Jerzy Potocki to Józef Beck," November 2, 1938, 2/322/9915, MSZ, AAN.

⁸⁵ "Jerzy Potocki to Józef Beck," 1–3.

project and asked him not to embroil the Polish government in the affair.⁸⁶ By mid-November, however, members of the Jewish-American Joint Distribution Committee once again considered the issue of helping Jewish refugees from the Reich more important. Potocki reported that channeling emigration from Poland to Angola became a less urgent issue to them, as the German pogrom of November 9–10 precipitated further waves of refugees.⁸⁷

In the aftermath of the *Kristallnacht*, Warsaw channeled its search for influence in the matter of Jewish emigration into ultimately unsuccessful efforts to persuade the ICR to include Zbąszyń refugees in its agenda. The German ambassador Hans-Adolf von Moltke wrote that Poland was “not at all interested in opening the Jewish question at home as a result of the events in Germany.” Instead, Poland was “endeavoring all the more to include Poland wherever international possibilities for solving the problem are discussed.”⁸⁸ In a telegram to selected Polish consular posts from the following day, Jan Szembek echoed Nazi technocratic anti-Semitic arguments, suggesting that Polish nationals expelled from Germany had “no ties to Poland whatsoever” and should therefore be treated as German refugees.⁸⁹ “Dealing solely with Jewish refugees from Germany,” Szembek added, “de facto places a premium on Germany’s Jewish policy at the cost of those countries that treat the Jewish problem as an economic and population issue and wish to resolve it in a humanitarian manner based on cooperation with Jews and within the framework of international collaboration.”⁹⁰ The British did not budge, however. Lord Winterton wrote to Edward Raczyński that only “persons whose country of origin is Germany”

⁸⁶ “Telegram from Józef Beck to Jerzy Potocki,” November 9, 1938, 2/322/9915, MSZ, AAN.

⁸⁷ “Telegram from Jerzy Potocki to Józef Beck,” November 17, 1938, 2/322/9915, MSZ, AAN.

⁸⁸ Hans-Adolf von Moltke, “The Ambassador in Poland to the Foreign Ministry,” November 22, 1938, 133, doc. 103, DGFP 1918-1945 D/V.

⁸⁹ Jan Szembek, “Instruction of the Under Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Paris and Envoys in The Hague and Brussels in Connection with Germany’s Expulsion of Jews of Polish Citizenship,” November 23, 1938, 42, doc. 17, PDPF 1938/1939.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

would be dealt with.⁹¹ Still, according to an internal memo, giving Poland satisfaction in the matter would not create an unnecessary precedent, since, “as far as is known, there are no other groups in Germany who possess a nationality other than German” and since “the Polish Jews in question are, except for the technical possession of Polish nationality, in precisely the same position as other Jews in Germany.”⁹² Despite this partial acceptance of the Polish thesis, Britain expected Poland to refrain from making the situation more difficult with its own emigration demands.

The sidelining of Warsaw from international discussions of Jewish emigration did not mean that imagining potential colonial solutions ceased to preoccupy the Brühl Palace. During a conference at Drymmer’s office that took place on November 29, 1938 it was decided that Polish diplomats would continue advertising the “special pioneering abilities of Polish Jews,” particularly in agriculture, to persuade Westerners to open colonial regions in Africa.⁹³ Moreover, Beck’s emissaries no longer refrained from making threats. In a conversation with Sumner Welles at the State Department in early December 1938, Potocki claimed that Jewish-Americans were ready to sponsor emigration to colonial territories as long as the great powers could iron out the details of such emigration.⁹⁴ The ambassador also stated that Poland could not patiently wait for what his government considered its own Jewish Question to be dealt with next in line, as it was advised to. He threatened Welles that, if the colonial powers and financial institutions failed to facilitate Jewish emigration, “Poland will have to adopt a sharper course toward the Jews, as it can see that only pressing the issue forcefully can bring results,” which implied state-sponsored deportations

⁹¹ “Draft of a letter from Lord Winterton to Edward Raczyński, for Lord Winterton’s signature,” November 22, 1938, FO 371/22537/W15316, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

⁹² “Polish Government’s request,” December 6, 1938, 3, FO 371/22539/W16027, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

⁹³ “Unsigned Note on the Problem of Jewish Emigration,” November 29, 1938, 51, doc. 20, PDFP 1938/1939.

⁹⁴ Jerzy Potocki, “Report of the Ambassador in Washington on Discussions at the Department of State on the Subject of Jewish Emigration,” December 9, 1938, 56–57, doc. 22, PDFP 1938/1939.

or even violence.⁹⁵ During another series of discussions at the U.S. State Department, the Under-Secretary of State Messersmith tried to appease Potocki, saying that, in his opinion, “it would be worthwhile to think about the purchase or acquisition of colonies for Jewish emigration and to activate emigration to Palestine.”⁹⁶ In his turn, as early as the day after the *Kristallnacht*, Drexel Biddle lobbied Roosevelt to pressure London, given that “the British Government might be willing to consider favorably offering territory at one or more points in their colonies for the purpose of setting up a Jewish State” if “the United States joined Britain in the guarantee of such a state.”⁹⁷

Whitehall now stated that at least a limited possibility of colonial Jewish settlements existed. The conclusions of a Cabinet meeting from November 16, 1938 regarding the absorption capacities of different British colonies pointed to the general need of giving “generous promises, even if those promises had to be subject to some degree of qualification.” At the same time, the agricultural nature of the British colonies in Africa was deemed as a major obstacle to Jewish emigration. In terms of specific territories, Kenya, due to “some trouble in regard to native lands,” could only welcome 25 families, while Northern Rhodesia could only receive 500 immigrants.⁹⁸ The Poles’ allies in the cause of channeling Jewish emigration to Africa, namely the idealist Richard von Coudenhove-Kalergi and the Conservative delegate Victor Cazalet, claimed in this context that both white colonists and Zionists opposed mass Jewish immigration to Northern Rhodesia.⁹⁹ The British considered Tanganyika, too, supposedly to indicate that it was not to be

⁹⁵ Ibid., 57.

⁹⁶ Jerzy Potocki, “Report of the Ambassador in Washington on Discussions at the Department of State,” January 14, 1939, 84, doc. 31, PDFP 1938/1939.

⁹⁷ “Anthony Drexel Biddle to Franklin D. Roosevelt,” November 10, 1938, Biddle, Anthony J. Drexel, 1937-May 1941, Box 24, President’s Secretary’s File, FDRPL.

⁹⁸ “Extract from Cabinet - Conclusions,” November 16, 1938, 6–8, FO 371/22537/W15120, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

⁹⁹ “Edward Raczyński to the Emigration Division,” December 2, 1938, 2/322/9758, MSZ, AAN; Edward Raczyński, “Raport polityczny No. 25/3. Plany kolonizacji żydowskiej w Północnej Rodezji,” December 14, 1938, 2/322/9758, MSZ, AAN; “Edward Raczyński to the Emigration Division,” December 15, 1938, 2/322/9758, MSZ, AAN.

returned to Germany in a potential appeasement, but the governor of the territory nonetheless informed London that about 200 sq. km could be made available in the Southern Highlands.¹⁰⁰ In consequence, the British directed the ICR to look for emigration outlets in South America, in particular in the Guianas, rather than in Africa. This was a process in which Polish Jews tried to participate, with the Brühl Palace's eager blessing. In early 1939, the Jewish Colonization Committee (*Żydowski Komitet do Spraw Kolonizacji*) began to cooperate with international experts investigating Dutch Guyana (Surinam).¹⁰¹ Only after the fall of Poland to Nazi Germany, however, did the ICR consider including Polish nationals in its settlement projects in the Guianas.¹⁰²

Meanwhile, Whitehall was pressured to investigate the possibility of acquiring concessions in Angola from the Portuguese, this time for Jewish settlers. The Polish delegate in Lisbon, Karol Dubicz-Penther, had reported to the Brühl Palace already in March 1937 that the Portuguese government opposed all Jewish emigration into its colonies. Moreover, since Portuguese Jews remained under the influence of the NZO, they, too, expressed indifference to "supplementary territories."¹⁰³ Nonetheless, at the beginning of February 1939, the U.S. diplomat Myron Taylor inquired whether the British took Angola into consideration, especially the areas "served by the Benguella Railway."¹⁰⁴ In response, the Foreign Office wrote that "Lord Halifax has come to the

¹⁰⁰ "Draft Statement," November 20, 1938, 6, FO 371/22537/W15343, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.); Makins, "Admission and settlement of refugees in United Kingdom and Colonial Empire," November 23, 1938, FO 371/22537/W15343, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁰¹ "Notatka dla P.VI. Aktualny stan sprawy emigracji żydowskiej," December 1938, 2/322/9913, MSZ, AAN; "Jewish Colonization Committee to Jan Wagner," June 27, 1939, 2/322/9914, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁰² "Sylwester Gruszka to the Ministry of Social Assistance in Angers," December 12, 1939, 2/490/926, Ambasada RP w Waszyngtonie, AAN.

¹⁰³ "Karol Dubicz-Penther to the Emigration Division," March 27, 1937, 65010/12.9, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹⁰⁴ "Proposed refugee block settlement in certain territories of Portuguese West Africa (Angola)," February 2, 1939, FO 371/24097/W1872, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

conclusion that it would serve no useful purpose (...) to take this extremely delicate matter up with Lisbon (...).¹⁰⁵ In a memorandum, Whitehall explained that its “special relationship” with the Portuguese would not be enough to pressure them.¹⁰⁶ Nonetheless, two months later, Augusto d’Esaguy, the chairman of a Portuguese committee assisting Jewish refugees, pointed out the presence of 4,000 refugees in Portugal and suggested that Angola’s new governor was willing to allow many of them to settle in his colony.¹⁰⁷ Still, the matter came to a rest in September 1939, with Whitehall now telling the White House that negotiating with the Portuguese was impossible in wartime.¹⁰⁸

Madagascar, Episode 2

By the outbreak of World War II, all international projects to channel Jewish emigration to colonial territories had failed. In the meantime, however, Poland’s bilateral negotiations with France regarding settlement in Madagascar confirmed that any attempt to insert Jews into debates over the nature of the Colonial Question did not agree with the Western powers, either.

In 1908, the French had offered Madagascar as an emigration outlet for Catholic Polish farmers to a peasant representative to the Galician Sejm named Wiktor Skołyszewski.¹⁰⁹ By 1921, the “great island” was also the object of Jean Dybowski’s semi-official offer to the Polish government, turned down due to opposition from the radical Left, which accused the Polish-French

¹⁰⁵ “A.W.G. Randall to Myron Taylor,” February 8, 1939, FO 371/24097/W1872, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁰⁶ “Memorandum,” February 1939, FO 371/24097/W1872, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁰⁷ “Entry of Refugees into Portugal and settlement in Angola,” July 6, 1939, FO 371/24097/W100240, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁰⁸ “Settlement of refugees in Angola,” September 27, 1939, FO 371/24097/W14069, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁰⁹ Jan Stapiński, *Pamiętniki*, ed. Krzysztof Dunin-Wąsowicz (Warsaw: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1958), 294–95.

colonial expert and his supporters of attempting to stifle the agricultural reform in Poland.¹¹⁰ Notwithstanding this early failure, however, the idea of Polish-Catholic emigration to Madagascar did not disappear. In April 1930, for example, *Wychodźca* featured an article that examined the “great island” in terms of its environment and population, concluding that its economic development stagnated as the French could not carry out further settlement without the assistance of other European powers and the indigenous population growth was merely at the level of sustenance.¹¹¹ It was not until the coming to power of the Popular Front in France in May 1936 that prospects of any emigration to Madagascar became more tangible as Léon Blum’s government considered Jewish settlement in French colonies as a potential solution to the refugee and labor crises.¹¹² Nor was it until late 1936, as has been shown, that Warsaw considered channeling Jewish emigration to Africa. In fact, it is possible that Jewish-French projects encouraged Beck to combine what his cabinet was constructing as the Jewish Question with the more economic-based strand of the Polish colonial agenda. The French ambassador Léon Noël informed his superior, Yvon Delbos, that Beck had questioned him about Madagascar before the start of the affair, claiming that it was necessary “to render some hope in the future to a [Jewish] population that is generally miserable and that has the impression of finding itself in a situation without a way out.”¹¹³

The memory of French overtures to Poland concerning Madagascar, now combined with Beck’s recent pronouncements in Geneva, certainly made the Brühl Palace attach special meaning

¹¹⁰ Hieronimko, “Żołnierz Królowej Madagaskaru,” *Robotnik*, June 12, 1921.

¹¹¹ Z. Ludkiewicz and Żabko-Potowicz, “Madagaskar,” *Wychodźca*, April 6, 1930, 6–8.

¹¹² Vicki Caron, *Uneasy Asylum: France and the Jewish Refugee Crisis, 1933-1942* (Stanford University Press, 1999), 142–43.

¹¹³ “Léon Noël to Yvon Delbos,” January 18, 1937, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

to any French utterances concerning emigration to Madagascar.¹¹⁴ The statement that ultimately precipitated Warsaw to express its interest, however, was an interview with Marius Moutet, the French minister of colonies, published in the mainstream newspaper *Le Petit Parisien* on January 16, 1937. Moutet declared that, given what he described as Jewish agricultural successes in Palestine, the settlement of Jews in climatically moderate areas in French colonies such as northern Madagascar might be possible if carried out by colonists “supported by serious organizations and disposing of necessary financial means.”¹¹⁵ The French minister’s interview caused an immediate reaction in the Polish ruling camp, with the front page of the semi-official *Polska Zbrojna* outlining its main points only one day later.¹¹⁶ Whitehall, too, believed that Moutet’s interview was a response to a Polish request from late 1936 or early 1937.¹¹⁷ The French ministry of colonies, however, claimed that its boss’s statement was a reaction to an appeal from the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Jews in Central and Eastern Europe.¹¹⁸ Indeed, in November 1936 Maurice Dormann of the Jewish committee had asked the governor of Madagascar, Léon Cayla, about the possibility of conducting studies of settlement conditions of northern and eastern Madagascar, marketing Jews as experienced pioneers capable of raising Malagasy living

¹¹⁴ Historian Magnus Brechtken has suggested that Beck was justified in perceiving Moutet’s interview as a response to his colonial agenda in Geneva. See Magnus Brechtken, *“Madagaskar für die Juden”: antisemitische Idee und politische Praxis 1885 - 1945* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998), 103.

¹¹⁵ “A propos d’un projet d’établissement d’israélites dans les colonies françaises,” *Le Petit Parisien*, January 16, 1937.

¹¹⁶ “Czy emigracja żydowska do francuskich kolonii jest możliwa?,” *Polska Zbrojna*, January 17, 1937, 1. Likewise, the anti-Semitic opposition’s newspaper *ABC—Nowiny Codzienne* translated fragments of the interview, pointing out that “sending Jews to Madagascar was not as unrealistic as the Jewish and Folkist press claimed”: “Realizacja projektu ‘ABC.’ Kolonie francuskie stoją otworem dla emigracji żydowskiej,” *ABC—Nowiny Codzienne*, January 17, 1939, 12.

¹¹⁷ “Jewish immigration into Madagascar,” April 8, 1938, FO 371/2161/C2662, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹¹⁸ “Telegram from the Ministry of Colonies to Léon Noël,” January 19, 1937, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

standards.¹¹⁹

Beck's ministry immediately acted upon the opportunity. On January 23, 1937 the Polish ambassador in Paris, Juliusz Łukasiewicz informed the Brühl Palace that Paris had consented to a commission consisting of a representative of the Polish government and one or two Jewish experts, which would travel to Madagascar to examine settlement possibilities.¹²⁰ Exactly two months later, Wiktor Drymmer communicated to the embassy in Paris that Mieczysław Lepecki would lead the commission and that it was scheduled to leave Marseille later in the spring.¹²¹ Blum's government supported the Polish initiative: at the end of March, Delbos asked Moutet to consult him in the decision-making process and to keep him informed about all services rendered to Lepecki.¹²² Likewise, Madagascar's governor, Léon Cayla, expressed his support for the endeavour and offered help.¹²³ At the end of April, riding the wave of opportunity, Lepecki asked the French to pass legislation that would favor Polish settlement in the "great island."¹²⁴ Moutet himself warmly welcomed the Polish representative and his newly formed "Studies Commission" on May 14, 1937 but underlined that prospective Jewish colonists would have to be pioneers, not merchants, and that Jewish groups would need to pay for the settlement.¹²⁵ Lepecki's "Studies Commission" turned out to consist of his ubiquitous self and two Polish-Jewish experts named Leon Alter and Salomon

¹¹⁹ "Maurice Dormann to Léon Cayla," November 30, 1936, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP; "Note sur les possibilités d'installation à Madagascar et en Nouvelle-Calédonie d'immigrants israélites provenant des pays d'Europe Centrale et Orientale," November 4, 1936, 7, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

¹²⁰ "Telegram from Juliusz Łukasiewicz to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," January 23, 1937, 45004/22.2, Ambassade (France), HILA.

¹²¹ "Telegram from Wiktor Drymmer to the Embassy in Paris," March 23, 1937, 45004/18.2, Ambassade (France), HILA.

¹²² "Yvon Delbos to Marius Moutet," March 31, 1937, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

¹²³ "Léon Noël to Marius Moutet," April 15, 1937, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

¹²⁴ "Telegram from Ignacy Ziętkiewicz to Wiktor Drymmer," April 28, 1937, 45004/22.3, Ambassade (France), HILA.

¹²⁵ "Ignacy Łukasiewicz to Józef Beck," May 14, 1937, 2/464/1/6, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

Dyk. (Figure 2)



Figure 2. The "Studies Commission." From left: Salomon Dyk, Leon Alter, Mieczysław Lepecki; the last symbolically apart. Source: Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, *Madagaskar: kraj, ludzie, kolonizacja* (Warsaw: Rój, 1938).

project in order to deflect accusations of anti-Semitism, selected these particular individuals, but one explanation might be related to their authority and expertise. Leon Alter was the president of the Jewish Emigration Aid Society (JEAS) in Warsaw, which was a part of the international Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HICEM) that helped refugees prepare for emigration. Moreover, Alter had

been involved in the Polish Emigration Society (PTE) and his articles had appeared in *Wychodźca*.¹²⁶ Dyk, in turn, had worked as an agricultural expert in Prussia during World War I. He was then employed as a manager of Prussian farms until the Germans fired him in 1932 for maintaining Polish citizenship, which encouraged him to relocate to Palestine.¹²⁷

The participation of Jewish experts helped to attract the interest of the Jewish public to the affair. In February 1937, the Zionist Revisionist newspaper published in Warsaw, *Der Moment*, dispatched a journalist named Szulim Gottlieb to Madagascar to assess the living situation of local Jews.¹²⁸ In May 1937, moreover, Charles J. Liebman of the Refugee Economic Corporation, a U.S. association aiding Europe's Jews, asked the French ambassador in Washington whether Jewish

¹²⁶ Jerzy Mazurek, *Kraj a emigracja: ruch ludowy wobec wychodźstwa chłopskiego do krajów Ameryki Łacińskiej (do 1939 roku)* (Warsaw: Biblioteka Iberyjska, 2006), 145–46.

¹²⁷ "Reich and Prussian Ministry for Food and Agriculture to Wilhelmstrasse," October 15, 1937, R 104194, Referat Pol.V Polen, RZ 211 Politische Abteilung 1936-1945, PAAA.

¹²⁸ "Consulate in Marseille to Robert Ducrocq," February 1937, 2/464/3/462, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

emigration to Madagascar would be possible and offered to finance it.¹²⁹ The Jewish circles in France, however, worried that Madagascar would give Poland's Jews "hopes without a tomorrow and lead to an exodus whose cost, sooner or later, would need to be supported by France."¹³⁰ There was naturally immediate opposition from Zionists, too, especially given the uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the Peel Commission, which was at the time examining the possibility of partitioning Palestine. To quell these concerns, on May 21, 1937 the Polish government released a communique proclaiming that it would not put forward Madagascar as Palestine's competitor for the title of a Jewish "national home."¹³¹ At the same time, not all Polish commentators considered Madagascar an appropriate destination for Jews, either. In February 1937, Waław Gąsiorowski pointed out in *Wychodźca* that instead Madagascar was a perfect territory for Poland and should not be awarded to the Jews, since it was sparsely populated, rich in resources, and remote from points of international tension, where civil liberties could be given to the Malagasy in exchange for economic concessions.¹³² All the same, the "great island" was first considered as a Jewish emigration outlet.

An Emigration Outlet or a Pioneering Settlement?

The "Studies Commission" consisting of Lepecki, Alter, and Dyk left Marseille aboard the French ship "Compiègne" on May 5, 1937, projected to sail to Madagascar through the Suez Canal, the Red Sea, and the Indian Ocean.¹³³ At Port Said, however, another, unexpected person joined

¹²⁹ "Georges Bonnet to Yvon Delbos," May 21, 1937, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

¹³⁰ "Note pour la Direction Politique," April 16, 1937, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

¹³¹ Buell, *Poland. Key to Europe*, 224; Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, *Madagaskar: kraj, ludzie, kolonizacja* (Warsaw: Rój, 1938), 15.

¹³² Waław Gąsiorowski, "Przymierzmy Madagaskar," *Wychodźca*, February 28, 1937, 2–3.

¹³³ Lepecki, *Madagaskar*, 15.



Figure 3: Léon Cayla, the French governor of Madagascar and supporter of Polish-Jewish settlement. Source: NAC 1-E-3545.

the company: the renowned traveler Arkady Fiedler, whom Bogusław Miedziński, the head editor of *Gazeta Polska*, paid to serve as Lepecki's "controller," since the government considered the major's past reports of colonial settlement possibilities too optimistic.¹³⁴ At the very end of the month, the "Compiègne," now carrying four experts, arrived in Madagascar's largest port city of Tamatave.¹³⁵

Initially, the "Studies Commission" encountered discernible reserve from French officials; this prompted Moutet to instruct Cayla to discipline his subordinates to express a warmer welcome.¹³⁶ After the "Compiègne" had arrived in Tananarive on June 3, however, the governor Léon Cayla gave the guests a warm welcome thanks to this intervention and the mediation of Robert Ducrocq, the Polish honorary consul in Tananarive.¹³⁷ (Figure 3) In mid-June, Cayla arranged for a conference to take place between the Polish commission and his administration, during which the directors of Madagascar's health and agricultural services assured Lepecki that climate was not an obstacle to white settlement in the island's north.¹³⁸ In a message to Moutet from June 22, Cayla confirmed the conference's evaluation of the island's north and described certain regions as possessing "the double advantage of offering a rather important surface of available land and of enjoying a

¹³⁴ Arkady Fiedler, *Wiek męski - zwyczajski* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1983), 133–35.

¹³⁵ Lepecki, *Madagaskar*, 15.

¹³⁶ "Telegram from Marius Moutet to Léon Cayla," June 2, 1937, GGM 8 B 162, Correspondance générale et registres divers, Série B, Madagascar, ANOM.

¹³⁷ "Robert Ducrocq to the Consulate in Marseille," June 15, 1937, 2/464/1/6, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

¹³⁸ Lepecki, *Madagaskar*, 16.

relatively moderate climate because of their average altitude (between 700 and 1,100 m).”¹³⁹

It was decided that Lepecki’s team would embark on five expeditions. The first one took place in the “central high plateau,” which included the areas around Tananarive, Nanisana, Tsiroanomandidy, and Belobaka. The second expedition was to the agricultural research station at Ivoloïna and along the coast of the Indian Ocean near Mananjara in the east. Next, the commission toured the Bara country in the far south as well as the Antanosy country near Fort Dauphin, including local agave and castor oil plantations. The next expedition, this time to the west, covered the city of Majunga (Mahajanga) and the economic hinterland of Port Bergé, as well as the island of Nosy Be, which was deemed conducive to agriculture. The fifth and last expedition was to the northern parts of the Mahajanga region, during which the commission toured the area known as Ankaizina and comprising the Mandritsara and Bealanana districts.¹⁴⁰ In total, the “Studies Commission” and Fiedler completed 11,000 km of land journey.¹⁴¹

It was the last expedition that turned out to be most important: Ankaizina, and the district of Bealanana in particular, were described as most appropriate for European settlement. Lepecki was to assess this area in terms of climate (preferably moderate), soil (preferably fertile), and location (preferably sparsely populated with indigenous tribes).¹⁴² In his report from Madagascar, which was published after the return of the “Studies Commission” to Poland in the fall of 1937, Lepecki pointed out that a French agricultural expert named C. Champenois had previously identified Ankaizina, whose square footage (18,700 sq. km) equaled two Polish provinces, as fulfilling the three criteria. Champenois had also mentioned the possibility of the area receiving

¹³⁹ “Léon Cayla to Marius Moutet,” June 22, 1937, GGM 3 B 108, Correspondance générale et registres divers, Série B, Madagascar, ANOM.

¹⁴⁰ Lepecki, *Madagaskar*, 16–18.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 228.

European settlers in 1933.¹⁴³ In turn, the Polish major described Ankaizina's location between two coasts as economically auspicious and politically unproblematic, given the alleged "low level of civilizational development" of the local Tsimihety people.¹⁴⁴

In particular, the district of Bealanana (9,850 sq. km) (Figure 4), parts of which consisted of mountains and swamps, also featured many so-called *cuvettes*, or alluvial soil, which allegedly allowed for the cultivation of demanding crops like coffee, as well as laterite soil supposedly appropriate for less demanding crops like rice and potatoes.¹⁴⁵ At the same time, however, Lepecki did not look forward to settlement through rose-colored glasses. In the first place, colonists would need to build roads and railways that would connect the area to Maroantsetra, more than 100 km away.¹⁴⁶ Bealanana's mountainous topography, moreover, made turning it an economic unit difficult, since its "division into isolated valleys of diverse conditions and climates does not favor mutual communication."¹⁴⁷ The other potential problem was Bealanana's understudied microclimate, which had only been subject to scientific observation since 1934. Drawing from available reports, however, Lepecki argued that, mostly thanks to its elevation above the sea level, the district's average temperature was 18°C and did not exceed 31.5°C in the summer months. The precipitation in Bealanana could also be detrimental to agriculture, according to the Polish expert, since it was extremely high during the rainy season lasting from November to March, but the fogginess of the dry season allegedly protected crops from being burned in the sun.¹⁴⁸ Notwithstanding potential limitations, Lepecki thus estimated that Bealanana could receive as

¹⁴³ Ibid., 230.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 230–31.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 231–33.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 230–31.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 239.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 239–41.

of fighting malaria.¹⁵² Moutet acknowledged these concerns and asked the Polish side to draft a project that could be presented to the French government, advising the selection of a truly pioneering “human material” that would withstand “all the difficulties, in the first place those from the local population, related to such a large-scale European pioneer action in this area.”¹⁵³ At the same time, Delbos indicated that any potential transports of Jewish emigrants from Poland to Madagascar should benefit French shipping lines.¹⁵⁴ Still, the French foreign minister’s rapprochement with Beck and acknowledgment of his colonial agenda based upon the demographic and economic arguments constructed in Warsaw at the beginning of December made the situation most auspicious for the Madagascar project.

One potentially debilitating problem for Warsaw became the discrepancy between Lepecki’s report and those of the Polish-Jewish members of the “Studies Commission,” who accused the Polish government of anti-Semitism. According to an article from the German-Jewish Zionist newspaper *Jüdische Rundschau*, Alter and Dyk underlined that Madagascar’s climate and



Figure 5. Malagasy farmers. Since Madagascar was a highly agricultural country, it was widely believed that “urban” Jews could not settle there. Source: NAC 1-E-9694.

indigenous opposition to immigration prohibited mass white settlement, which would, in any case, require “urban” Polish Jews to transform themselves into farmers, to invest enormous capital in the “great island,” and to subscribe to a powerful idea that would motivate them to undertake

¹⁵² Stebelski, “Raport radcy handlowego przy ambasadzie w Paryżu na temat projektu polskiej kolonizacji północnej części Madagaskaru,” 709.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ “Yvon Delbos to Marius Moutet,” November 5, 1937, 53PCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

personal sacrifices.¹⁵⁵ (Figure 5)

It was, according to Alter, the “urban” nature of Polish Jews that undermined the “illusion” of Madagascar. Alter told an informant of the British ambassador Howard Kennard that, “although there was much good land on the central plateau, the climate made it quite unsuitable for Jewish colonization and that in any case it would be impossible to settle Jewish artisans and tradesmen, who form the large bulk of Jewish emigrants, in a land where for a long time to come only agricultural workers can be employed.” Kennard also reported to Whitehall that Warsaw prevented Alter from publishing his opinion in government-friendly newspapers.¹⁵⁶ Likewise, Noël noted that a mass Jewish emigration to Madagascar was impossible also because of Jewish physical weakness.¹⁵⁷ Ironically, while “defending” Jews from an “expulsion” to Madagascar, Kennard and Noël subscribed to certain anti-Semitic tropes about their physical fitness. In contrast, Léon Cayla did not seem to worry, writing to the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of Jews in Central and Eastern Europe that Bealanana and other high plateau regions could be settled. Cayla stated that “it seemed possible to constitute six to seven centers of colonization,” each between 300 and 800 sq. km of usable land.¹⁵⁸ Warsaw attempted to repair any damage that reports from the Jewish experts might inflict. In early January 1938, Lepecki claimed in the *Gazeta Polska* that Alter and Dyk agreed with his observation that, in terms of climate, Ankaizina was suitable for settlement.¹⁵⁹ Likewise, Michał Pankiewicz defended his former colleague from the PTE against unfavourable comparisons to Alter, arguing that the commission’s Jewish member was only an expert in

¹⁵⁵ “Ende einer Illusion. Polnische Erklärungen über das Madagaskar-Projekt,” *Jüdische Rundschau*, December 31, 1937, 2.

¹⁵⁶ “Howard William Kennard to Anthony Eden,” December 27, 1937, 4, FO 371/20763/C8957, Political Departments General Correspondence, Foreign Office, TNA (U.K.).

¹⁵⁷ “Léon Noël to Yvon Delbos,” January 15, 1938, 11–12, 200PAAP/2, Papiers d’Agents, ADP.

¹⁵⁸ “Léon Cayla to Henri Guernut,” January 4, 1938, 2, 242QO/453, Service français de la Société des Nations, ADP.

¹⁵⁹ Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, “Prawda o Madagaskarze,” *Gazeta Polska*, January 7, 1938, 3.

emigrant transportation.¹⁶⁰

Notably, neither Lepecki nor Pankiewicz debated the scale of possible emigration. Instead, the Brühl Palace doubled down on their technocratic anti-Semitic tropes, stating that Jewish leaders mostly resisted the project for targeting Jews exclusively, and that their opposition would make it difficult to motivate any Jewish “pioneers” to undertake sacrifices.¹⁶¹ In January 1938, therefore, the Consular Department debated whether Madagascar should become a sphere of Polish (non-Jewish) economic influence, or whether it should serve as a Jewish emigration outlet complementary to Palestine, with the first option deemed preferable. In the latter scenario, however, both Jewish and Ukrainian emigrants could be dispatched to maintain a “social-political balance” on the “great island.”¹⁶² At the same time, using Madagascar as both an object of economic exploitation and a Jewish emigration outlet was considered a possible recipe for failure.¹⁶³ Furthermore, the Brühl Palace discussed a “tactical project” whereby the initial exclusion of Jews from a lucrative Polish partnership created for settlement in Madagascar would serve as an alleged source of irritation for Jewish leaders and ultimately lure them into sponsoring the project themselves.¹⁶⁴

In this manner, only a year after it had first proposed it, the Polish government shifted the focus of the Madagascar project from Jews to non-Jews, albeit in the hope that, with time, Jewish leaders would discern the supposed advantages of joining it. An internal note written for Beck argued that it was Madagascar’s economic attractiveness and the French recognition of Poland’s

¹⁶⁰ Michał Pankiewicz, “Wojna o Madagaskar,” *Gazeta Polska*, April 4, 1938, 3.

¹⁶¹ “Część II. Projekt taktyczny,” January 17, 1938, 2/322/9826, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁶² “Notatka,” January 17, 1938, 2/322/9826, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ “Część II. Projekt taktyczny.”

colonial aspirations that warranted the shift.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, the Brühl Palace attempted to incorporate the Madagascar project into the broader set of agreements that it negotiated with the Quai d'Orsay in the context of the Polish-French rapprochement. In the first place, to fulfill Moutet's request for a plan, it drafted a Polish-French immigration treaty according to which Poland would be granted no fewer than 4500 sq. km in Bealanana in an "eternal concession" for the settlement of 10,000-15,000 families of Polish settlers. In a likely reference to Jews, it was ordered that only 15% of the colonists would be practitioners of "liberal professions."¹⁶⁶ According to a secret clause of the proposed treaty, special Polish "sections" would be established at the colonial administration of Madagascar to deal with issues such as the Polish settlers' education, in addition to Polish police forces and radio stations, among other privileges.¹⁶⁷ Another agreement to be signed between the French ministry of colonies and the Polish partnership stipulated that France would pay for irrigation, infrastructure, and other preparatory works in Bealanana.¹⁶⁸

While drafting these documents, the Polish foreign ministry planned an experimental "settlement action," during which a "stormtrooper team with military discipline and maneuver equipment" would build a mill and an administrative house and would survey the land.¹⁶⁹ Beck asked the financial minister Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski for 1,000,000 zł (~\$187,000) to purchase 440 sq. km in Bealanana from to a certain Hindu named Hassanaly, the deadline for which was about to pass.¹⁷⁰ In total, the Brühl Palace estimated that carrying out settlement over ten years would

¹⁶⁵ "Notatka dla Pana Ministra w sprawie kolonizacji polskiej na Madagaskarze," January 1938, 2/322/9826, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁶⁶ "Projekt umowy o imigracji między Rzeczpospolitą Polską i Republiką Francuską," January 1938, 2/322/9826, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁶⁷ "Uzupełnienie tajnej umowy imigracyjnej zawartej między Rządami Polski i Francji," January 11, 1938, 2/322/9826, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁶⁸ "Projekt umowy koncesyjnej między Ministrem Kolonii Republiki Francuskiej a Towarzystwem Osadniczym," January 11, 1938, 2/322/9826, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁶⁹ "Pierwsza grupa techniczna," 1938, 2/322/9826, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁷⁰ "Józef Beck to Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski," January 12, 1938, 2/322/9826, MSZ, AAN.

cost 25,370,000 zł (~\$4,787,000).¹⁷¹ It is unclear whether Warsaw actually submitted its pipe-dream proposition, but it was still predicted that the plan would face major reservations from Paris, given its policy of favoring indigenous Malagasy farming. Moreover, the French defined “colonists” as administrators dispensing of large capital rather than as farmers with smaller savings.¹⁷²

It was geopolitics, however, that ultimately torpedoed the Polish ambitions as the growing Austrian crisis and France’s domestic disputes resulted in the gradual downfall of the Popular Front in France.¹⁷³ One of the early signs of the changing French attitude toward Madagascar was the replacement of Marius Moutet with a much less optimistic Théodore Steeg during Camille Chautemps’s interim government between Blum’s first and second terms. In February 1938, Steeg wrote that, while farmers would find more opportunities in the “great island,” Jewish merchants and artisans would fail at agriculture and would find it difficult to compete with existing Chinese and Hindu intermediaries.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, in one of his final messages to Delbos, Noël praised Moutet’s ultimate restraint from deciding whether to allow Jewish immigration into Madagascar. He argued that “the Poles express total ignorance in colonial matters” and that, if any emigration was to take place, the funding would have to come from Jewish organizations. This scenario was unlikely, according to the French ambassador, since Jews treated Madagascar as “a sort of an expulsion project.”¹⁷⁵ The Brühl Palace had apparently failed to communicate to the French that it

¹⁷¹ “Notatka dla Pana Wicepremiera Kwiatkowskiego w sprawie funduszków pożyczkowych na akcję osadniczą na Madagaskarze,” January 1938, 2/322/9826, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁷² “Trudności wpływające ze strony francuskiej, które mogą być wykorzystane przy rozmowach z czynnikami francuskimi, popierając tezy polskie,” 1938, 2/322/9826, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁷³ Roger Price, *A Concise History of France*, Cambridge Concise Histories (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 277–79.

¹⁷⁴ “Théodore Steeg to Yvon Delbos,” February 9, 1938, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

¹⁷⁵ “Léon Noël to Yvon Delbos,” March 8, 1938, 2, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

no longer considered the “great island” an emigration outlet for Jews, at least not exclusively, which made Paris believe that the Madagascar project continued to be exclusively anti-Semitic.

At the same time, a local press campaign started in Madagascar, pitting French colonists and Malagasy against Jews. Citing the opinion of one “Lucetius,” which praised the entrepreneurial nature of Jews and reproached anti-Semites for opposing their immigration,¹⁷⁶ a “Madécasse” (Malagasy) wrote in *Le Journal de Madagascar* that no “sensible people” desired Madagascar to become a dumping ground for an unwanted and unproductive people.¹⁷⁷ Four days later, one G. Olsoufieff alleged in the same newspaper that “Jewish industry” in eastern Europe and South America had been nothing but usury and that Polish Jews possessed an “excessively weak and sickly physique” unsuited to the climate.¹⁷⁸ Another contributor, who signed off as Hermelin, reasoned that France could not accommodate Jews, since French colonists already “have to manage however they can, oftentimes with barely existing labor.”¹⁷⁹ Columns in other newspapers explicitly warned against a Jewish “invasion.” In *L’Effort*, for example, one Yeber asked: “If in Poland, three million Jews keep thirty million autochthonous people in poverty, how could three million inhabitants [of Madagascar] manage faced with a hundred thousand Jews?” He appealed to the entire population of Madagascar, including the Malagasy, to stop what he called the Jewish “menace” and “unite (...) to counter this assassination of [our] settlement.”¹⁸⁰ In fact, many Malagasy commentators did not wish for Jews to immigrate, or expressed their indifference at best. In March 1938, one of them identified the project of Jewish settlement in Madagascar as France’s way of appeasing Poland at the cost of the indigenous people.¹⁸¹ Only the Malagasy

¹⁷⁶ Lutecius, “Aux mangeurs de juifs...!,” *Le Journal de Madagascar*, February 9, 1938.

¹⁷⁷ Madécasse, “Aux amateurs de juifs...!,” *Le Journal de Madagascar*, February 11, 1938.

¹⁷⁸ G. Olsoufieff, “Réponse à M. Lutecius,” *Le Journal de Madagascar*, February 15, 1938.

¹⁷⁹ Hermelin, “Les Juifs,” *Le Journal de Madagascar*, February 19, 1938.

¹⁸⁰ Yeber, “Contre l’invasion juive, colons, serrons les coudes!,” *L’Effort*, February 26, 1938.

¹⁸¹ Andriamorasata, “La Terre Promise. Madagascar et la colonie juive,” *Le Petit Tananarivien*, March 31, 1938.

leftists agreed that Jews could come to Madagascar as long as they did not receive any preferential treatment and would be subject to the same rules as everybody else.¹⁸²

It is no wonder, given this anti-Semitic campaign, that the Quai d'Orsay resisted Whitehall's suggestions to send Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria to Madagascar.¹⁸³ In response to the British requests, Daladier's minister of colonies, Georges Mandel, stated his financial and logistical reservations to the Madagascar project but also cited the potentially negative political implications of supporting it, namely the danger of sanctioning the existence of a Jewish "problem" in Europe, which might, in his opinion, lead to further persecutions of Jews. Moreover, Mandel worried that, if Jewish communities prospered in French colonies, their success would enable their countries of origin, including Poland, to lay territorial claims to them.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, the sharpening of the Jewish refugee crisis in the fall made little impact on the French. At the end of October 1938 Georges Bonnet, Daladier's replacement for Delbos, instructed his ambassador in Washington to dispel any "illusions" about Madagascar's capacity to accept Jewish refugees that Sumner Wells might harbor.¹⁸⁵ Once the *Kristallnacht* further debilitated the refugee problem, however, the State Department was not persuaded that Paris had good intentions.¹⁸⁶

In the meantime, the Brühl Palace, which decided to remove Jews from the project already

¹⁸² Robert Jeune, "La question de l'immigration juive et de l'introduction d'une main-d'œuvre étrangère à Madagascar!," *Le Proletariat Malgache*, June 17, 1938.

¹⁸³ "Georges Bonnet to Georges Mandel," May 6, 1938, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

¹⁸⁴ "Georges Mandel to Georges Bonnet," May 25, 1938, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP. Mandel gave a similar explanation to the communist deputy Paul Loubradou: "Georges Bonnet to Paul Loubradou," May 7, 1938, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

¹⁸⁵ "Georges Bonnet to René Doyne de Saint-Quentin," October 31, 1938, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

¹⁸⁶ "René Doyne de Saint-Quentin to Lagarde," November 11, 1938, 53CPCOM/91, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

in January 1938, attempted to repair the damage resulting from what it considered the unfortunate geopolitical shift, working to persuade the French to allow limited non-Jewish pioneering action. As the Polish honorary consul Ducrocq pointed out, the local population was not necessarily opposed to Polish-Catholic settlement but could not tell the difference between “Polish” and “Jewish.”¹⁸⁷ Moreover, according to Arkady Fiedler, himself a critic of Lepecki, the negative press coverage of the Madagascar project intensified further after the *Anschluss*, with articles now intentionally skewing parts of the Polish major’s report and opposing not only Jewish but also Polish-Catholic immigration.¹⁸⁸

Rescuing the Madagascar Project

Warsaw’s first and most important step toward rescuing the project was gathering more intelligence to assess its realistic chances of creating a pioneering settlement in Madagascar, in particular local attitudes. One individual to whom the Brühl Palace assigned this task was Maria Zakrzewska (Mikorska), a female journalist writing for the semi-official *Kurier Poranny*, whom one Polish consular agent described as “intelligent,” “astute,” “worldly,” and “a true ‘globetrotter.’”¹⁸⁹ After arriving in Madagascar at the beginning of June, Zakrzewska planned to join a group of French journalists traveling to the southern regions of the country.¹⁹⁰ In the meantime, however, she spent a couple of days in Tananarive, where she visited the office of *Le Journal de Madagascar* and spoke to the newspaper’s head editor named H. Vidalie. She allegedly introduced herself to him as an independent journalist from Warsaw in no way affiliated with the

¹⁸⁷ Ducrocq quoted in “Tadeusz Drobniak to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in London,” September 1, 1943, 59003/132.33, MSZ, HILA.

¹⁸⁸ Arkady Fiedler, “Madagaskar jako teren naszej ekspansji,” December 5, 1938, 16–18, 2/322/9826, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁸⁹ Zygmunt Fudakowski, “Strzępy Wspomnień” 1996, 27, KOL.745/3, Fudakowski Family Files, PISM.

¹⁹⁰ Louis Dussol, “Attestation,” July 26, 1938, 2/464/3/462, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN; “Maria Zakrzewska to the Consulate in Marseille,” July 26, 1938, 2/464/3/462, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

Polish government. Nevertheless, Vidalie printed a supposedly inaccurate interview with Zakrzewska, according to which she was an official delegate from Warsaw.¹⁹¹ Poland's honorary consul Ducrocq informed Warsaw that Vidalie was an opponent of Polish immigration and wished to exaggerate Zakrzewska's importance.¹⁹² The episode demonstrated to the Brühl Palace the extent to which the French colonial circles in Madagascar opposed its settlement project. At the same time, however, the mission of Zakrzewska – a Polish agent indeed – continued and resulted in a report that illuminated the situation that Warsaw faced in the “great island.”

After completing her journey in the second half of 1938, Zakrzewska suggested that, in contrast to French colonists, the highest echelon of Madagascar's administration, including Cayla, believed that European settlement in the highland regions was possible and that not enough attempts had been made. Zakrzewska wrote that French officials had also reassured a Hindu merchant from whom Warsaw wished to purchase a concession in Beleanana that press attacks against him would stop and that his offer to the Polish government had an official approval from Paris.¹⁹³ At the middle and lower levels of the French administration, however, the opinion was that an addition of white farmers would disturb the colonial balance of power, which would tilt in favor of the Malagasy. In contrast, the French farmers constituted the group most positively disposed toward Polish immigration, which hoped to strengthen their ranks vis-à-vis the administrators.¹⁹⁴ Lastly, the Malagasy supposedly viewed all white immigration as a further sign of colonial expansion that worked against their independence.¹⁹⁵ According to Zakrzewska, the other factors making the Madagascar project difficult included the French policy of replacing white

¹⁹¹ “Maria Zakrzewska to the Consulate in Marseille.”

¹⁹² “Robert Ducrocq to the Consulate in Marseille,” July 25, 1938, 2/464/3/462, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

¹⁹³ Maria Zakrzewska, “Madagaskar,” 1938, 1–3, 2/322/9826, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

labor with indigenous labor in order to appease Malagasy nationalism, as well as the fear of white newcomers bringing communism.¹⁹⁶ Insofar as Ankaizina was concerned, she deemed it to be a good site for the first Polish experiment in settlement, as long as a road was built to connect it to the coast and remove it from the influence of Chinese and Hindu intermediaries.¹⁹⁷

Warsaw's other agent, Arkady Fiedler, painted a more complicated picture of settlement possibilities. In his report submitted to Brühl Palace in December 1938, Fiedler praised Lepecki's monograph as thorough, logical, and objective. He argued that the only reason for his disagreement with the Polish major was the timing of their respective stays in Madagascar: his own much longer trip supposedly allowed him a more comprehensive perspective.¹⁹⁸ In the first place, Fiedler critiqued Lepecki's assessment of Bealanana, writing that shortly after the Polish major's departure an official French surveyor named Tricard surveyed the district and discovered much less alluvial soil than previously believed to be present.¹⁹⁹ In turn, Fiedler deemed only 300 sq. km of alluvial soil found in Bealanana's six valleys, especially near the eastern rivers of Ampariha and Manampatra, as suitable for farming, and only once drained.²⁰⁰ While essentially agreeing with Lepecki that Bealanana was climatically similar to Paraná and that the French had judged it with a bias, the writer pointed out that the dry season in the former was more extreme, which required more irrigation infrastructure.²⁰¹

This did not mean, however, that Fiedler did not believe in Poland's colonial expansion in Madagascar. He instead proposed a "realistic" approach and reduced the number of European

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5–10.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10–12.

¹⁹⁸ Fiedler, "Madagaskar jako teren naszej ekspansji," 3–4.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 4–5.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 10–11.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 5–7.

families that could settle there to 1,000-1,500.²⁰² He pointed out, moreover, that only this limited and “politically secure” immigration of Polish-Catholic farmers would be acceptable, but also believed that it would create a strong basis for an ultimate uprooting of the French, whom he described as gradually losing their national identity.²⁰³ He suggested that, as a politically neutral group in Madagascar, the Poles could play the Merinas (former masters of the island), the Creoles, and the French against one another.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, the writer proposed taking advantage of the handful of local Polish merchants willing to serve as intermediaries and to accept assistants from Poland.²⁰⁵ In conclusion, Fiedler advised the Brühl Palace to purchase Hassanaly’s concession in Bealanana, to establish a trade post in Tananarive, to contact a Polish entrepreneur named Marian Gierliński in Antalaha about his vanilla plantation, and to consider establishing a mining partnership.²⁰⁶

Fiedler chose to strike a more optimistic note in his popular report published in 1939 under the title *Tomorrow to Madagascar!* He underlined the alleged Polish influence in Madagascar, hailing both historic and contemporary Polish “heroes,” for example Jan Beyzym (1850–1912), a Polish Jesuit priest who had constructed a special hospital for lepers at Marana near Tananarive and died while treating them.²⁰⁷ Fiedler also praised the deeds of Polish entrepreneurs who had come to the “great island” to plant raffia palms and trade in their valuable fiber.²⁰⁸ He distinguished one Służański for his entrepreneurial attitude during French-Malagasy conflicts, which this former Habsburg subject had taken as an opportunity to enrich himself, and for demonstrating his lasting

²⁰² Ibid., 10–11.

²⁰³ Ibid., 20–23.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 34.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 27–28.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 35–38.

²⁰⁷ Arkady Fiedler, *Jutro na Madagaskar!* (Warsaw: Rój, 1939), 72–80.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 102.

attachment to Poland. The other objects of Fiedler's praise included Franciszek Górski from the Poznań province, creator of a large raffia trading post in Majunga; Kazimierz Drótkowski, Górski's former employee and owner of a cinema in Tamatave; Hieronim Obst, a "pioneer" of raffia processing and ship owner; Leon Bark, a rags-to-riches raffia merchant; as well as a certain Strandman, director of a gold mine.²⁰⁹ Fiedler proclaimed in a Polish nationalist manner: "I do not exaggerate or look through rose-colored glasses. I am simply saying that they are stout-hearted fellows! Whoever still doubts in Polish colonial-commercial expansion, let him come to Madagascar and see."²¹⁰

Fiedler's aim, however, was not only to feed into his readers' national pride but also to underline that Poland's colonial expansion should assume a commercial rather than agricultural character. He hesitated to give a straightforward answer to whether Polish settlers should come to Ankaizina and expressed his support only if the project was carried out extremely carefully and honestly, "without sick ambitions, without dangerous dreams, realistically, modestly."²¹¹ He hoped that his countrymen had learned from their mistakes in Peru and was glad that the "great island" was not Cumaria but had allegedly already been "incorporated into the whirlpool of the world economy."²¹² In this manner, Fiedler lobbied the Brühl Palace to abandon the idea of mass emigration to Madagascar and to establish a trade network around Ankaizina. He argued that only 1,000 families could settle in Beleanana and called Champenois's report from 1933, which served as Lepecki's major point of reference, an "erratic fantasy."²¹³ In his postwar memoirs, moreover, Fiedler was much less diplomatic in his critique of Lepecki's report than in 1938–1939, claiming

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 104–11.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 244.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 272–76.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 262–71.

that his colleague's identification of Bealanana's "swamps" as an emigration destination was the major's last-minute, desperate attempt to manufacture success. He also called the prospects described in Lepecki's "pseudoscientific book" a "fantasy, naïve mirage, and one of the typical utopias dreamed up in contemporary Poland."²¹⁴ At the same time, Lepecki's report was not an object of critique from the scientific expedition that Warsaw dispatched to Madagascar in April 1938.²¹⁵

One of the members of this expedition was Jan Kiełpiński, an agricultural expert and professor at the Jagiellonian University, whose return from Madagascar in early 1939 was announced in the *IKC*.²¹⁶ The Brühl Palace had asked Kiełpiński, initially supposed to study tropical agriculture at the French experimental stations in Ivoloïna and Nanisana, instead to examine Ankaizina, where the Polish expert arrived at the end of August 1938.²¹⁷ His report from the area, published in 1947, did not seem to contradict Lepecki's interwar findings. Kiełpiński deemed Ankaizina's northern part as one of the healthiest areas in Madagascar, its alluvial and laterite soils as quite rich, its indigenous Tsimihety tribe as friendly toward whites, and its economic and political potential as still unfulfilled. Most importantly, moreover, Kiełpiński did not question Lepecki's estimate of the number of families that could settle in Ankaizina (10,000–15,000).²¹⁸ In 1947, Kiełpiński's attitude toward interwar Poland's colonial ambitions was highly reserved; it therefore seems justified to take his report, published almost ten years after the actual expedition, as a sober account written years after an old journey.

²¹⁴ Fiedler, *Wiek męski - zwycięski*, 138–39.

²¹⁵ "Telegram from Wiktor Drymmer to the Embassy in Paris," April 26, 1938, 45004/18.5, Ambasada (France), HILA.

²¹⁶ L. T., "Kraków ogniskiem studiów kolonialnych," *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, March 2, 1939, 18.

²¹⁷ Jan Kiełpiński, "Sprawozdania. Ankaizina," *Przegląd Geograficzny* 21, no. 3–4 (1948): 295–96.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 300–313.

In addition to the salient question of Bealanana/Ankaizina in Polish discourse, another issue of importance to the Brühl Palace was the extent to which it could benefit from the story of Maurycy Beniowski, a Hungarian count and a Polish-Lithuanian patriot. Lepecki argued that Beniowski, whom he identified as the “conqueror” of Madagascar, was hardly an “adventurer” (*awanturnik*) and that “noble aims” allegedly motivated his second colonial expedition to the “great island” in the mid 1780s. He pointed out that Beniowski’s mission enjoyed the support of the American founding father, Benjamin Franklin, but angered the French merchants, whose trade it supposedly disrupted.²¹⁹ The Polish major dreamed that Beniowski’s legacy would facilitate his country’s expansion in Madagascar and was glad to find traces of the count, for example a street named after him in Tananarive.²²⁰ Fiedler was likewise interested in retracing Beniowski’s story, spending much of his time in Ambinanitelo, a village near Maroantsetra, where the count landed in 1774. While in Ambinanitelo, the writer managed to befriend the local population and was wedded to two ritual “wives.” In one of his accounts, Fiedler observed that local Betsimisaraka had forgotten Beniowski almost completely, but also that some of their local dances supposedly resembled polkas and mazurkas. In turn, Fiedler set out to educate his hosts about Beniowski’s exploits in the region.²²¹ He rejected the French accusation that Poland attempted to stage an indigenous uprising but did depict Beniowski as a warrior “for your freedom and ours.” Fiedler also united different tribes against an unjust French sergeant, hoping for the legend to inspire the Malagasy to fight for their rights.²²² In fact, in his report for the Brühl Palace, Fiedler critiqued many elements of French colonial rule: the preference for indigenous labor and discouragement of

²¹⁹ Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, *Maurycy August Hr. Beniowski: Zdobywca Madagaskaru* (Lwów: Książnica Atlas, 1938), 205.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 208.

²²¹ Arkady Fiedler, *Madagaskar: Gorąca wieś Ambinanitelo*, ed. Wojciech Cejrowski (Pelplin: Bernardinum, 2006), 141–42, 164–65.

²²² *Ibid.*, 23, 218–23.

white immigration, poor sanitation standards breeding malaria, reckless environmental exploitation, harsh penal policies for Malagasy tax delinquencies, and public sexual orgies that decreased the reputation of the “white race.”²²³

In 1939, the Brühl Palace could not undertake any Promethean colonialism in Madagascar, however, since it wished to reinstate the project as an item on the Polish-French bilateral agenda. Indeed, this appeared possible as the two countries finally put aside their differences in the months leading to World War II and as the French showed a renewed interest in Ankaizina. In May 1939, Georges Mandel ordered a special French commission to examine the region and identify areas suitable for white and indigenous settlement, respectively.²²⁴ One month later, Warsaw asked the embassy in Paris to take advantage of the newly forged alliance with France in another attempt to increase economic cooperation with the French possessions, particularly with Madagascar.²²⁵ The embassy was to inquire whether the French would facilitate a free monetary exchange between their colonies and Poland or consider signing a colonial annex to the existing trade treaty.²²⁶ In a separate instruction concerning emigration to Madagascar, the embassy was to ask the French to allow an experimental settlement of a hundred Polish-Catholic families in a selected area of the “great island.” At this experimental stage, the only responsibilities of the French government would be to disconnect the project from the old project that targeted Jews, to contain any negative press responses, and to forbid other nationalities from settling in the designated area, while a joint Polish-French partnership would ensure the appropriate preparation of the Beleanana in terms of

²²³ Fiedler, “Madagaskar jako teren naszej ekspansji,” 29–33.

²²⁴ “Zbigniew Michałowski to the Consulate in Marseille,” March 26, 1939, 2/464/3/338, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

²²⁵ Mirosław Arciszewski, “Zastępca podsekretarza stanu do ambasady w Paryżu w sprawie aktywności polskiej na terenie kolonii francuskich,” June 10, 1939, 586–87, doc. 341, PDD 1939/I.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 587.

housing, irrigation, transportation infrastructure, scientific expertise, and agricultural supplies.²²⁷

By the outbreak of World War II, therefore, the Brühl Palace had endorsed Fiedler's commercial form of colonial expansion in Madagascar and completed the process of separating the "Colonial Question" from the "Jewish Question," which now became two different ideological constructs.

The Exclusion of Jews from Colonial Projects

As long as Nazi Germany annexed new territory in Europe, the Western powers channeled their energy into helping refugees escape from Hitler's expanding empire. They therefore ignored Warsaw's requests for "supplementary territories" outside of Palestine. In consequence, the Polish government, despite its technocratic strand of anti-Semitism being ostensibly different from the more explicit and rabid anti-Semitism of the extreme Right, considered making its Jewish emigration policy violent. According to an unsigned memorandum from February 1939, the Consular Department considered two solutions to the "Jewish problem," the first one of which would be the initiation of a "Polish-Jewish war," presumably pogroms, and alliance with the Germans. This was considered undesirable and potentially harmful to Polish interests, however.²²⁸ Instead, the Polish government believed that the more realistic solution was a "constructive collaboration with Jews," especially those from abroad, under the condition that they finance the emigration of 1,500,000 of their brethren over a thirty-year-period.²²⁹ It was argued that the right moment had come to force the second "solution" upon Jews, since Hungary and Romania were pursuing Nazi-like policies of discrimination and extermination, respectively, with which Poland could contrast its own more moderate policy. An official of the Polish foreign ministry

²²⁷ Mirosław Arciszewski, "E.I.275-17a/4. Tajne," June 10, 1939, 2/322/9593, MSZ, AAN.

²²⁸ "Niepodpisana notatka o 'problemie żydowskim' dla dyrektora Departamentu Konsularnego," February 1939, 124, doc. 62, PDD 1939/I.

²²⁹ Ibid.

recommended that, in the first place, a series of anti-Jewish laws should be introduced, limiting Jews from participating in certain professions and imposing an “emigration tax” upon them as “instruments” of pressure that could be lifted in the future.²³⁰

During a conference that Mirosław Arciszewski, one of Beck’s deputies, held on February 23, 1939, Michał Łubieński stated his opposition to pressuring Jews to leave, since “a significant number of Jews will always remain in Poland and must identify with the Polish state.” He instead proposed a soft-power approach: indoctrinating Jews in Zionism, which would increase emigration to Palestine and, conversely, create the need for finding “new settlement areas.”²³¹ Drymmer’s deputy Władysław Sokołowski, in contrast, argued that economic pressure was necessary to eliminate the perception among Jews that Poland was an attractive immigration destination for them.²³² Another high official of the ministry, Tadeusz Kobylański, opposed the formulation of Poland’s “Jewish problem” in general terms as fruitless and lobbying for specific areas to which Jews could emigrate, with Zarychta essentially concurring.²³³ The conference did not result in any decisions to increase anti-Jewish pressure; by September 1939, the Brühl Palace had not passed anti-Jewish measures at the national level.²³⁴ Nonetheless, the OZN, which served as the Polish government’s popular support base and paramilitary wing, endorsed local initiatives like the “ghetto benches” and other measures intended to lower the socioeconomic status of Jews. Still, in some cases, members of the OZN expressed the idea that they carried out their self-appointed anti-Semitic duties only reluctantly. In another memorandum written in February 1939, the director of

²³⁰ Ibid., 124–25.

²³¹ “Niepodpisana notatka z konferencji ‘w sprawach żydowskich’ u zastępcy podsekretarza stanu,” February 24, 1939, 114, doc. 57, PDD 1939/I.

²³² Ibid., 115.

²³³ Ibid., 114–15.

²³⁴ Grzegorz Krzywiec, “Czy państwo w Polsce pomajowej było czynnikiem antyżydowskim (1926–1939)? Stan badań i perspektywy badawcze,” in *Państwo i społeczeństwo Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. Janusz Żarnowski, vol. 8, *Metamorfozy Społeczne* (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 2014), 370–88.

the Studies Section in the Emigration Division, Antoni Paprocki, observed that, while “the lower ranks of voters and the situation forced it to make anti-Semitic statements,” the OZN would not settle for “pure anti-Semitism.” According to Paprocki, “the OZN had to steal the wind of anti-Semitism from the sails of the more radical political splinter groups in a bargaining fashion, through certain foggy declarations, but it did so and continues to do so for propaganda reasons only, without conviction.”²³⁵

Notwithstanding this ambivalence, the OZN’s own set of “colonial theses,” whose author was none other than Mieczysław Lepecki, reflected the progressing detachment of Jews from the national and imperial projects. The Polish major pointed out that “in recent years a sort of a terminological mess (*rozgardiasz*) has occurred in relation to national-Polish emigration (*emigracja narodowo-polska*), to Jewish emigration, and to the matter of acquiring colonies for Poland.” He confirmed that “Poland needs colonies for its population surplus and to obtain raw materials in its own currency, without its trade balance incurring a heavy cost” and added that “Poland [also] needs emigration outlets for Jews.” Lepecki clarified, however, that “this is a different problem and one must clearly underline this ‘difference.’”²³⁶ He argued:

“It would be an unforgivable mistake to lose any overseas territorial capacities for the sake of a new Jewish national home or some African-Jewish state. This does not mean, however, that we shall not demonstrate understanding for the efforts of Jews to create their own state outside of Europe. In no case, however, should we combine our own need of colonies with Jewish emigration possibilities. Poland needs colonies only for itself and for its nation, not for Jews. For the latter, we can only demand emigration

²³⁵ Antoni Paprocki, “Sprawa żydowska w Polsce,” February 2, 1939, 10–11, I.303.4.5745, Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego, CAW WBH.

²³⁶ Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, *Polskie żądania kolonialne* (Warsaw: Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego, Oddział Propagandy, 1939), 6.

outlets. For ourselves, in contrast, we should acquire colonies in Africa, where an outlet could be found for Polish-national elements for whom – for reasons not necessarily of their own creation – our own quarters [*rogatki*] are too tight or too economically idle. Naturally, these would need to be areas fulfilling another requirement, namely the ability to satisfy our hunger for raw materials.”²³⁷

According to Lepecki, therefore, the Polish nation excluded Jews, or at least most of them, since a “colony for Poland” was different from an emigration outlet for Jews. The former was to be found in Africa, where Poland was to mine necessary raw materials, while the latter anywhere outside of Europe.

Most importantly, Lepecki wished to ensure that the search for Jewish emigration outlets would not trump the search for colonies for Poland. In this manner, the Polish major did not necessarily imply that Jewish emigration was a less burning issue than Poland’s colonial acquisitions. At the same time, his “colonial theses,” published under the auspices of the OZN, addressed Polish Catholics only insofar as this “national element” was to be channeled into colonial pioneering.²³⁸ In this aspect, therefore, they differed from the Brühl Palace’s emigration policies drafted in 1936, which had singled out Jews but did not mind peasants leaving in large numbers as long as the two groups did not settle in the same locations. Clearly, since 1936 the Polish state had excluded Jews from the national and colonial projects even further. The Polish major’s insistence on separating what his camp constructed as the Jewish Question from the Colonial Question, however, should also be viewed in the context of the early Madagascar project, whose failure persuaded the Polish government that it was simply not pragmatic to combine them.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid., 7–11.

Conclusion

Poland's emigration policies dispatched Polish Catholics and the country's minorities to different locations around the globe. Inspired by the technocratic strand of anti-Semitism which characterized the late Sanacja, the Polish government "favored" Jews insofar as their emigration was to be concentrated in territories "supplementary" to Palestine. Unfortunately for the Brühl Palace, however, the international understanding for the need of "supplementary territories" dissipated as the Western powers channeled their energy toward dealing with Jewish refugees escaping the enlarged Nazi Germany, which Warsaw perceived as a "reward" to the Reich for its aggressiveness and an excuse to act more assertively. Still, the Brühl Palace tried to draw legitimacy from claiming that some Jewish groups also depicted Jews as merchants and pioneers who would make good colonists. In addition, Warsaw sometimes allowed Jews to maintain some form of an attachment to the Polish state, as it self-servingly considered their commercial potential to be useful for the colonial project.

Nevertheless, the Polish government came to believe that the goal of acquiring colonial emigration outlets for the Jewish masses and the goal of acquiring colonial raw materials from Polish-Catholic settlements could not be fulfilled in the same locations. Moreover, the conflation of the two objectives was seen by the colonial milieu to be counterproductive to each of them, which resulted in their definitive separation in 1939. This disentangling of what was constructed as the Jewish Question from the Colonial Question reflected both a further rise in anti-Semitism within Poland and shifts in the geopolitical context within which Poland operated. The shift from viewing colonial territories as emigration outlets for Jews to viewing them as sites of Polish-Catholic colonial experimentation also came about as Jewish leaders and French colonists opposed what they perceived as "dumping" Jews overseas or a Jewish "invasion," respectively.

Chapter 8

The Realistic Expansion

In the years 1936–1939, Beck’s diplomats played the colonial card in Poland’s foreign affairs and planned a Jewish (later Polish-Catholic) settlement in Madagascar. Nonetheless, Polish colonial aspirations resulted in more than political discourse, as the Brühl Palace also undertook a series of practical actions to fulfill its dual colonial agenda of managing the Polish-Catholic population remaining in South America and acquiring colonial raw materials in Africa. By the outbreak of World War II, a series of additional Polish-Catholic settlements and plantations popped up in the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland and in southeastern Africa, respectively. The impetus for these projects was mainly Poland’s industrial “backwardness,” which, in the minds of Beck’s cabinet, the worsening geopolitical situation made ever more acute. At the same time, despite the colonial milieu’s desire to separate them, other ideological constructs, particularly the “Jewish Question,” continued to be mentally mapped onto the Colonial Question. In order to explain the final nature of Polish interwar colonial expansion, this chapter explores the Polish state’s cooperation with companies and institutions to establish outposts of influence overseas.

International Company for Settlement in South America

It has already been demonstrated that the responsibility for emigration policies was transferred from the Emigration Office to the Consular Department under Drymmer in 1932. Around the same time, in consequence of the right-wing tilt of the Brazilian government, the focus of Polish colonial expansion switched from finding new areas for settlement in South America to concentrating settlers in the existing colonies in Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland. Moreover, the weight of “colonial pioneering” was altogether shifted toward Africa once the

LMiK emerged as Poland's most powerful "colonial" institution. By the first half of 1937, this separation between emigration policies (mostly in South America) and colonial policies (mostly in Africa) was reinforced despite Beck's simultaneous discursive conflation of the two in Geneva. The reason was the preference for promoting Jewish rather than Polish-Catholic emigration, which has been discussed in the preceding chapter. Still, it was a more limited Polish-Catholic emigration that was supposed to be the backbone of colonial pioneering for commercial, as opposed to demographic, purposes. This tightly controlled emigration was supposed to reinforce the Polish-Catholic population that remained in South America economically.

According to the "Ten-Year Settlement Plan" from the first half of 1937, Warsaw was to channel additional Polish-Catholic "colonial emigration" to the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland, where 12,000 families, or 45,000 colonists, would be concentrated in an area of 4,000 sq. km in the following ten years. The Brühl Palace dedicated 34,560,000 zł (~\$6,521,000) in subsidies to finance the transportation and landing of the emigrants, the land purchases, and the creation of experimental agricultural laboratories.¹ In the meantime, Zarychta initiated the creation of a joint-stock, state-controlled corporation to coordinate Poland's emigration policies in South America and, in effect, to fulfill the settlement plan. In turn, the International Company for Settlement (*Międzynarodowe Towarzystwo Osadnicze*, or MTO) was created on April 30, 1936 in conjunction with the BGK and PKO "Bank Polski" and under the direction of Mieczysław Lepecki.² The major objective of the MTO was to enable a further settlement of Polish Catholics in areas where colonies already existed and to synchronize their economic production to the Polish state's needs. Because of the high cost, the MTO was not to negotiate for any territorial concessions

¹ "Projekt 10 letniego planu osadniczego," 1937, 9–10, 2/322/9585, MSZ, AAN.

² Apoloniusz Zarychta, "Międzynarodowe Towarzystwo Osadnicze S.A. w Warszawie," January 17, 1939, 2/322/9840, MSZ, AAN.

in South America. Instead, it was to coordinate the activities of local semi-independent subsidiaries, delegated to purchase specific plots of land and establish settlements under the guise of regular partnerships.³

The foreign ministry set yet another objective for the company, however, which was unwritten and political in nature. The MTO would establish “centers of attraction” in Misiones, western Paraná, and southeastern Paraguay, which were identified as “definitively politically unstable” territories whose status could become prone to outside influence.⁴ In fact, Drymmer had explained already in October 1935 that it was in Poland’s interest to concentrate its settlements in the region around the Paraná and Iguaçu Rivers, near the Iguaçu Waterfalls, to create a “giant and united complex of Polish settlements” located near a “great center of hydroelectric power,” which would allow exploiting natural resources, using local rivers for trade, and generating energy.⁵ In addition, the Consular Department had identified the port city of Foz do Iguaçu as playing a crucial role in the economic life of the entire continent, offering a means of distributing staples such as yerba mate, wood, tobacco, and fruits to neighboring markets. Furthermore, a “Slavic” company called “Milanowicz,” mostly financed from Argentina but potentially subject to Polish financial infiltration, was supposedly already in control of important trade routes in the region.⁶ Money was, of course, needed for such infiltration, and the Polish state was to finance the MTO in several ways, one of which was the regular transfer of profits from state-supported importers of Brazilian coffee to a special “Export Fund.”⁷

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁵ Wiktor Tomir Drymmer to the president of the Agricultural Bank, October 17, 1935, 1, 2/322/9837, MSZ (1918-1939), AAN. Indeed, the Itaipu Dam, the world’s second largest hydroelectric power facility, was built on the Paraná River along the Brazilian-Paraguayan border in the 1980s.

⁶ “Nr 26. Notatka dla p.D.D.K. w sprawie Foz do Iguassu,” August 1935, 2/322/9577, MSZ, AAN.

⁷ “Notatka dla p.D.D.K. w sprawie wyłączenia z funduszu eksportowego sum na kolonizację /Centrokawa/,” April 1935, 2/322/9577, MSZ, AAN.

Unfortunately for the Poles, their highly ambitious designs to take control of the area around Foz do Iguaçu found a great obstacle in Brazil's new configuration of power. As the regime of the nationalist Getúlio Vargas turned ever more hostile toward foreign settlement schemes in the mid-1930s, the Brühl Palace became aware that dispatching large numbers of additional emigrants from Poland to settle in the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland would no longer be feasible. In order to increase the migration of Poles to the vicinity of Foz do Iguaçu, the Consular Department used its diplomatic posts and the PKO "Bank Polski" in Buenos Aires to relocate colonists from Brazil to other areas in South America, especially to northern Misiones, Argentina, a region known for growing yerba mate.⁸ Zarychta admitted that it was Vargas's immigration restrictions that encouraged Warsaw to create the MTO to serve as its proxy for moving settlers across the continent, as opposed to importing new ones from Poland.⁹ In turn, the MTO formed two theoretically independent entities for the purpose of selecting, purchasing, and preparing land for the mostly relocated colonists: the "Compañía Colonizadora del Norte" based in Buenos Aires and the "Companhia Colonizadora e Mercantil Paranaense" based in Curitiba, the latter also known under its Polish name "Parańska Spółka Kolonizacyjno-Handlowa." Moreover, the MTO also delegated representatives to Encarnación, Paraguay and Chapare, Bolivia.¹⁰

The Polish government had infiltrated the "Compañía Colonizadora del Norte" financially already prior to the creation of the MTO, with the French ambassador in Argentina reporting the Polish partnership's purchase of 460 sq. km in Misiones in December 1935.¹¹ The Polish expansion was quick and included the acquisition of a Polish-Brazilian partnership called "Vistula" alongside

⁸ "Nr 26. Notatka dla p.D.D.K. w sprawie Foz do Iguassu"; "Pierre Bressy to Pierre Laval," September 24, 1935, 106CPCOM/371, Série Z-Europe (Pologne), Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

⁹ Zarychta, "Międzynarodowe Towarzystwo Osadnicze S.A. w Warszawie," 2–4.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "French ambassador in Argentina to Pierre Laval," December 18, 1935, 106CPCOM/371, Série Z-Europe (Pologne), Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

its settlement of Polana (15 sq. km), which had been established in 1932 with the financial help of the PKO “Bank Polski” in Buenos Aires and advertised as benefitting from a healthy climate and easily accessible via the Paraná River.¹² In the mid-1930s, however, the settlement was sparsely populated and failing financially, which persuaded the Polish government to direct the “Compañía Colonizadora del Norte” to rescue the invested Polish capital.¹³ By December 1937, the MTO’s subsidiary controlled a total of 544 sq. km in Misiones, which featured 40,000 lucrative yerba mate trees.¹⁴

By January 1939, the “Compañía Colonizadora del Norte” was in charge of a smaller area in Misiones, but it had established a docking port on the Paraná River in order to increase its economic attractiveness for the Polish state. Moreover, it had created another supplementary settlement for Polish Catholics, which was named Wanda in honor of Piłsudski’s older daughter and known as Gobernador Lanusse in Portuguese. At the time, 94 families, or 450 colonists, inhabited both Polana and Wanda, but the latter was considered better built and more lucrative.¹⁵ Later in 1939, the financial situation of the “Compañía Colonizadora del Norte” declined as Argentina joined Brazil in introducing immigration restrictions, but Wanda itself, now malaria-free, supposedly produced considerable output, supplying a local company with tobacco and experimenting with growing a special type of nuts used to make industrial oils.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the colonists from Wanda might have not benefited from any prosperity, since a group of them

¹² Zarychta, “Międzynarodowe Towarzystwo Osadnicze S.A. w Warszawie,” 4–5; “Nowa Kolonia Polska ‘Polana’ w Argentynie,” 1930s, 2/534/2.1/4, Akta Pawła Nikodema, AAN.

¹³ “S-ka Vistula-Kol. Polana w Misiones,” n.d., 2/322/9837, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁴ “Referat wygłoszony przez Przewodniczącego Międzyministerialnej Komisji Emigracyjnej na Konferencji w dniu 10.XII.1937 r.,” December 10, 1937, 6, 2/322/9898, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁵ Zarychta, “Międzynarodowe Towarzystwo Osadnicze S.A. w Warszawie,” 4–5.

¹⁶ “Sprawozdanie Zarządu do punktu 2-ego porządku obrad dziewiątego posiedzenia Rady Nadzorczej M.T.O. - Argentyna,” 1939, 3–5, 2/322/9840, MSZ, AAN.

complained that the partnership was paying them less than agreed for labor and was selling them goods such as flour and rice above the market price.¹⁷

Meanwhile, the MTO's subsidiary in Paraná, the "Companhia Colonizadora e Mercantil Paranaense," received funding to channel additional Polish-Catholic emigrants into its concession of 638 sq. km, where it operated two colonies called Nowa Wola and Jagoda, with the latter named after Piłsudski's younger daughter. Both colonies had been made ready for settlers and equipped with wood mills. By January 1939, however, only 25 families, or 120 colonists, had arrived in Nowa Wola and Jagoda as Vargas introduced ever more restrictive immigration policies.¹⁸ While the latter settlement was sold later in 1939, the performance of Jagoda (today Quedas do Iguaçu), which became home to escapees and migrants from Montaña and Espírito Santo, was deemed as satisfactory: its wood mill sold lumber to local customers and a hydroelectric rice-processing plant was in operation.¹⁹ In addition, Jagoda supposedly featured living quarters, administrative buildings, motor roads, bridges, a shop, and a pharmacy. Mostly corn was grown as a staple and more than 100 pigs kept alongside a smaller number of cattle.²⁰ Beyond Jagoda and Nowa Wola, the MTO also administered the old settlement of Águia Branca, which the Colonization Society (TK) had established in Espírito Santo at the turn of the decade. By December 1937, under the direction of Franciszek Sokół, the priest responsible for saving Cumarí in Peru from a total ruin years earlier, Águia Branca was selling cotton, rice, and coffee to the outside world. Moreover, Warsaw received permission from the Brazilians to dispatch another 100 families from Poland,

¹⁷ "Grzegorz Oleksów to the Ministry of Social Assistance," April 24, 1939, 2/2210/53, Poselstwo RP w Buenos Aires, AAN.

¹⁸ Zarychta, "Międzynarodowe Towarzystwo Osadnicze S.A. w Warszawie," 5.

¹⁹ "Sprawozdanie Zarządu do punktu 2-ego porządku obrad dziewiątego posiedzenia Rady Nadzorczej M.T.O. - Brazylia," 1939, 2/322/9840, MSZ, AAN.

²⁰ "Referat wygłoszony przez Przewodniczącego Międzyministerialnej Komisji Emigracyjnej na Konferencji w dniu 10.XII.1937 r.," 8–9.

despite growing immigration restrictions.²¹ In January 1939, Apoloniusz Zarychta claimed that Águia Branca was beginning to prosper as an “area of mass production of crucial colonial articles /coffee, cotton/.”²²

The last Brazilian settlement which the MTO wished to turn into a viable economic unit belonged to the LMiK, where its pioneers had carried out an earlier “colonial action” along the Ivaí River, a tributary of the Paraná River. Lepecki suggested that Polish farmers should concentrate in this “beautiful” and “virgin” region as early as 1922.²³ In the early 1930s, the LMiK deemed the Ivaí River as marking the natural direction of Polish expansion, since as much as 30% of the population in some municipalities around Curitiba was “Polish,” presumably Polish-Catholic.²⁴ In April 1933, the LMiK’s interest in Paraná resulted in the delegation of a retired general Stefan Strzemiński (1885–1955)²⁵ and an agricultural expert Wolfram Jaroszyński to study the possibility of expanding Polish settlements beyond the ring around Curitiba. During their expedition in Paraná, Strzemiński and Jaroszyński lobbied its state government to complete the discontinued Riozinho-Guarapuava railway project (138 km), which would connect the Polish clusters in the area in terms of transportation infrastructure. In response, the Brazilian authorities promised to render as much as 20,000 sq. km available to the LMiK for the purpose.²⁶ By November 1934, however, the Polish government, with whom the LMiK cooperated, had not expressed enthusiasm in what was called the “great plan of colonization” (*wielki plan*

²¹ Ibid., 9–10.

²² Zarychta, “Międzynarodowe Towarzystwo Osadnicze S.A. w Warszawie,” 1.

²³ Mieczysław Bohdan Lepecki, “Kolonie polskie nad rzeką Ivaí w Paranie,” *Wychodźca*, August 20, 1922, 9.

²⁴ Tadeusz Białas, *Liga Morska i Kolonialna 1930-1939* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1983), 197.

²⁵ Stefan Strzemiński, I.480.581, Kolekcja Generałów i Osobistości, CAW.

²⁶ “Consulate in Curitiba to the Consular Department,” April 17, 1924, 702/13/76, Polish Legation in Rio de Janeiro, PIASA; “Notatka dla Dyrektora Departamentu Konsularnego w sprawie budowy linii kolejowej w Paranie,” 1933, 2/322/9578, MSZ, AAN.

kolonizacyjny). Instead, the MKE decided to co-finance the LMiK's acquisition of 70 sq. km of a former Indian reservation as a territorial concession in central Paraná.²⁷

Ultimately, after purchasing adjacent territories, the LMiK acquired control of as much as 300 sq. km, mostly in the forks of the Ivaí River, in the municipalities of Apucarana, Tres Bichos, and Cândido de Abreu. In this sparsely inhabited area, a settlement called Morska Wola (Faxinal da Catanduva) was launched and another called Orlicz-Dreszer planned in a separate location along the Piquiri River.²⁸ (Figure 1) Soon after the start of the project, however, the Polish government noticed serious problems in the LMiK's conduct, which included accusations of "special intimate preferences," likely a euphemism for pedophilia, levied against one of its school teachers.²⁹ Moreover, in March 1934 the local newspaper *Correio do Paraná* accused Strzemiński of carrying out an "imperialist plan" directed against the integrity of the Brazilian state, which generated angry responses in the Polish press.³⁰ Indeed, as a later intelligence report argued, the retired general had "arranged colonial escapades, consisting of entire caravans equipped with automobiles, weapons, tents etc." and squandered "public money in a manner that was reckless, to say the least."³¹ In the following year, the Polish government decided that Strzemiński should be recalled and the LMiK's activity limited.³²

²⁷ "Protokół posiedzenia Międzyministerialnej Komisji Emigracyjnej," March 20, 1934, 4–5, 2/8/6/72-1, Akta Grupowe 1932-1939, Prezydium Rady Ministrów w Warszawie, AAN; "Protokół posiedzenia Międzyministerialnej Komisji Emigracyjnej," November 20, 1934, 7–8, 2/8/6/72-1, Akta Grupowe 1932-1939, Prezydium Rady Ministrów w Warszawie, AAN.

²⁸ Białas, *Liga Morska i Kolonialna 1930-1939*, 199–201.

²⁹ Teodor Cybulski, "Nr 76. Notatka dla p.D.D.K. w sprawie osób wysłanych z inicjatywy Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej do Brazylii," n.d., 2/322/9577, MSZ, AAN.

³⁰ M.B., "Polska tworzy za Oceanem nowe państwo z dostępem do morza. Histeryczne alarmy szowinistów brazylijskich," *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, April 29, 1934, 2–3; M.B., "Oczekujemy przybycia polskiego sztabu generalnego," *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, April 29, 1934, 3.

³¹ "Raport o nastrojach kolonii polskiej w Paranie i S. Catarina," February 29, 1944, 3, 701/111/19/404, Independent Intelligence Unit ESTEZET, JPIA.

³² Teodor Cybulski, "Nr 35. Notatka z konferencji w sprawach emigracyjnych, odbytej w gabinecie p.D.D.K. w dniu 12 czerwca 1935 r.," n.d., 3, 2/322/9577, MSZ, AAN.

In December 1937, the Brühl Palace wished for the LMiK's settlement of Morska Wola to become an economically efficient unit that would turn the Polish-Catholic population in Paraná into agents useful to the Polish state. It stretched over 85 sq. km and housed 100 families (approximately 350 settlers), including twelve Ukrainian and two assimilated Brazilian families. According to the MKE, the colonists acclimated easily, enjoyed living in "elegant houses," and maintained a community center, a pharmacy, and a school. Furthermore, the settlement featured a vineyard, an orchard, and an experimental plantation of grains, cotton, rice, castor oil plant, and potatoes.³³ Despite its economic performance, however, the reinforcement of Morska Wola with new settlers was not possible for the same reason of an increasing clampdown from Rio de Janeiro, which caused the Brühl Palace to limit the LMiK's personnel to two representatives only.³⁴ In June 1938 the Brazilian envoy to Warsaw, Figueira de Mello, claimed that his government's measures had not been intended as anti-Polish, and that their anti-Polish function was only a side effect of their anti-German, anti-Italian, and anti-Japanese nature.³⁵

Notwithstanding such assurances, in February 1939 Lepecki reported that a decree was passed that would lead to an effective nullification of all land concessions in Paraná in reaction to a scandal concerning illegal exports of coffee from Paraná.³⁶ The new Polish envoy to Rio de Janeiro, Tadeusz Skowroński, told Beck's deputy, Jan Szembek, that the United States encouraged

³³ "Referat wygłoszony przez Przewodniczącego Międzyministerialnej Komisji Emigracyjnej na Konferencji w dniu 10.XII.1937 r.," 10–11.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁵ Jan Szembek, "Rozmowa z pos. Figueiro de Mello," June 1, 1938, 174, *Diariusz IV*.

³⁶ "Mieczysław Lepecki to the Emigration Division," February 24, 1939, 2/322/9804, MSZ, AAN.

Brazil to believe that Poland plotted to carve out a part of its territory for itself alongside Germany and Italy. He noted, however, that Rio's anti-European measures had a paradoxically positive

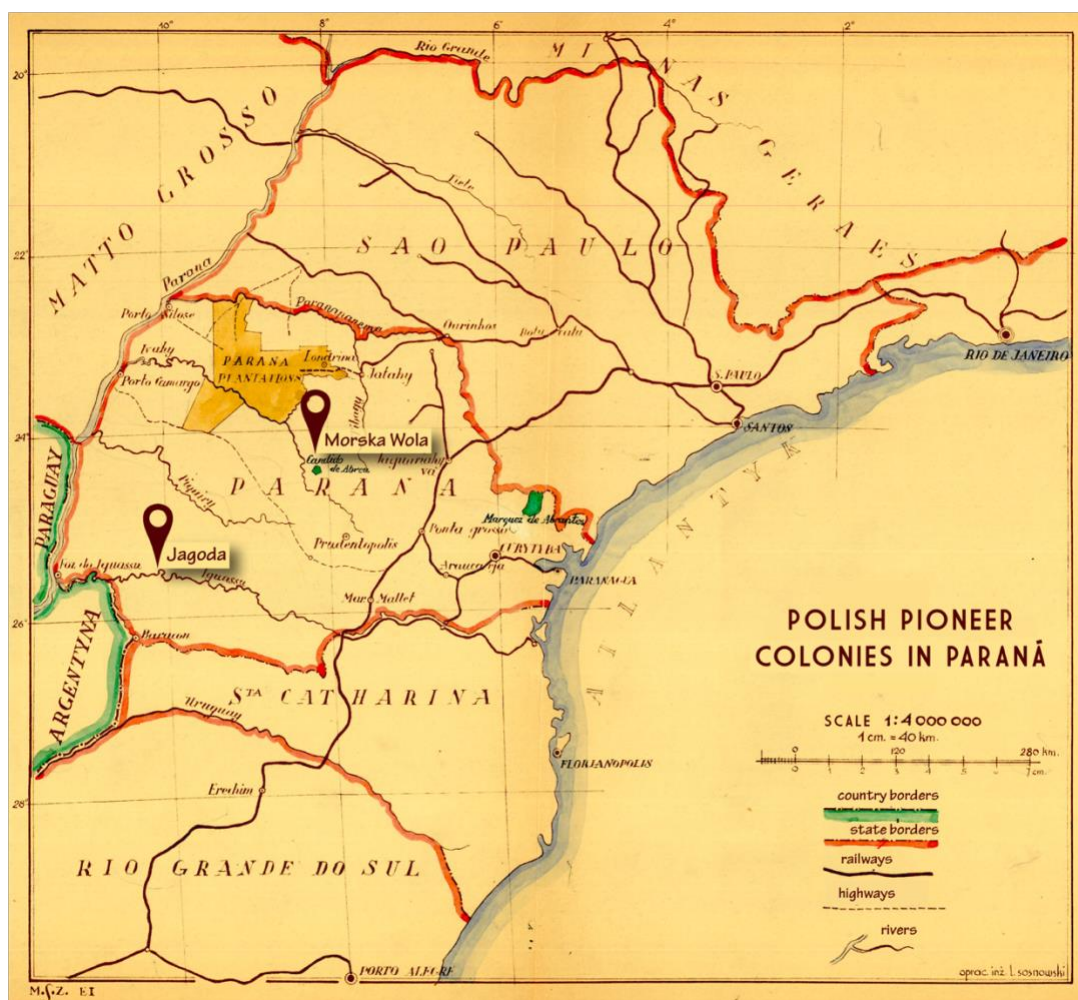


Figure 1. Map of Paraná showing the approximate location of Jagoda and Morska Wola. Edited from: AAN 2/322/9814. Copyright of the edited version: Piotr Puchalski.

impact as they caused a certain “cleansing” of some Polish colonies from “elements of questionable quality.”³⁷ By the end of the month, Skowroński reported more good news: Poland’s prestige increased after its rejection of Hitler’s ultimatum concerning Gdańsk and those Polish colonies in Brazil that were “full of questionable elements” started to collapse.³⁸ Certainly, however, the Brazilian clampdown did not help the Brühl Palace’s ambitions in the Brazilian-

³⁷ Jan Szembek, “Rozmowa z pośtem Skowrońskim,” April 3, 1939, 546, *Diariusz IV*.

³⁸ Jan Szembek, “Rozmowa z pośtem Skowrońskim,” April 28, 1939, 580–81, *Diariusz IV*.

Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland: in June 1939, the local situation forced the Polish consul in Curitiba to ask the LMiK to abandon the colonists of Morska Wola to their own devices.³⁹

The southern borderland region of Paraguay was the last space in which the Brühl Palace

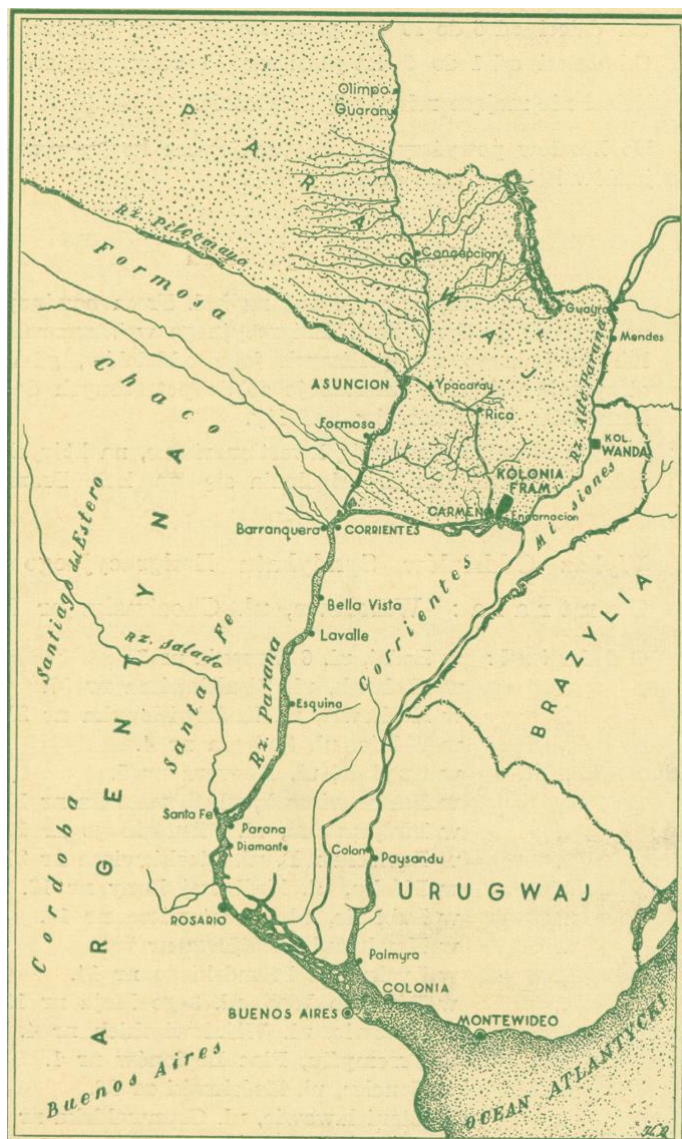


Figure 2. Map showing the approximate location of Fram and Wanda. Polana was located upriver from Fram in the direction of Wanda. Gobernador Lanusse was located farther downriver southwest from Fram. Source: AAN 2/322/9840.

wished to concentrate the Polish-Catholic settlers who remained in the region and to reinforce them with some new emigrants. In the late 1930s, the MTO cooperated with three local companies: “La Colonizadora Fram,” “Tierras y Yerbales,” and “Sucesores de Domingo Barthe.” In 1939, negotiations with the first of these resulted in an agreement that allowed the MTO to recruit colonists in Poland and sell them plots in the settlement of Fram located near the town of Carmen del Paraná.⁴⁰ (Figure 2) In fact, the Polish consulate in Buenos Aires had noticed the area’s economic attractiveness and its nationally ambiguous Slavic colonists as early as 1932.⁴¹ Three years later, the Brühl Palace noted the

³⁹ Białas, *Liga Morska i Kolonialna 1930-1939*, 206.

⁴⁰ “Sprawozdanie Zarządu do punktu 2-ego porządku obrad dziewiątego posiedzenia Rady Nadzorczej M.T.O. - Paragwaj,” 1939, 1–6, 2/322/9840, MSZ, AAN.

⁴¹ “Adam Dutkiewicz to the Emigration Attaché in Buenos Aires,” January 5, 1933, 2/322/9828, MSZ, AAN.

activities of White Russian émigrés attempting to orchestrate the settlement of stateless Slavic families with Nansen passports in Fram.⁴² In 1939, in the flyer addressed to potential recruits in Poland, Fram was now advertised as conveniently located at the intersection of two rivers and alongside a railway connecting the cities of Encarnación and Asunción, in a moderate region where the temperature did not exceed 35°C during summer and did not fall below 0°C in winter. Moreover, Fram was marketed as greatly suitable for farming and as undergoing industrial development; it was supposedly about to start producing cotton textiles and tomato conserves. Its total population was estimated at 6,000, mostly emigrants from Poland.⁴³

Table 1. Colonies Controlled by the MTO in the late 1930s

Subsidiary/Partner	Location	Area (sq. km)	Settlements	Settlers (approximate)
Compañía Colonizadora del Norte	Misiones, Argentina	485	Polana, Wanda, Gobernador Lanusse	450
Companhia Colonizadora e Mercantil Paranaense	Paraná, Brazil	638	Jagoda	150
Maritime and Colonial League	Paraná, Brazil	300	Morska Wola	350
Colonization Society	Espírito Santo, Brazil	500	Águia Branca	315
La Colonizadora Fram	Encarnación, Paraguay	780	Fram	100
Total		2,703		1,365

At the same time, Poland negotiated for an emigration treaty with Paraguay. By June 1939, however, the talks had stalled as Paraguay feared that, according to the way in which the draft of the treaty was written, it was presented as a state-like entity “analogous to colonial possessions.” In response, Poland was willing to accept one of Paraguay’s “prestige-related” demands, namely

⁴² “Nr. 62. Notatka dla p.D.D.K. w sprawie udzielenia zezwolenia na rekrutację rodzin obywateli nansenowskich na osadnictwo do Paragwaju,” February 16, 1935, 2/322/9577, MSZ, AAN.

⁴³ “Kolonja Fram, Paragwaj,” 1939, 2/322/9840, MSZ, AAN.

to have the treaty both signed and ratified in Asunción, contrary to diplomatic protocol.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, while the Brühl Palace perceived Paraguay mainly as an emigration outlet for Jews and Ukrainians, Warsaw's attempt to include an agreement to expand the Polish settlement area around Encarnación and Carmen del Paraná, including "Fram," brought the negotiations to a standstill in the months leading to World War II.⁴⁵

The projected emigration treaty between Poland and Bolivia, which was supposed to result in the creation of another Polish-Catholic economic hub, suffered a similar fate. In December 1937, Zdzisław Kurnikowski, the Polish delegate in Buenos Aires, signed an agreement with the Bolivian government to make 3,000 sq. km available to Polish citizens in the department of Cochamamba in the province of Carrasco along the Chapare, Ivirizu, and Coni Rivers. The area was described as elevated about 400-600 m above the sea level and abundant in good soil, with an average temperature of 23°C. Bolivia pledged to cover the cost of the land, which was in private hands, in three-fourths, to supply the settlers with a one-time landing subsidy, and to pay for the two-thirds of their transportation to the Pacific port of Arica. Most importantly, the Polish colonies would receive the right to establish their own schools and tax privileges. By March 1939, however, the ratified treaty was missing the signature of President Ignacy Mościcki, which was made contingent upon the inclusion of a concession agreement with the MTO.⁴⁶

In the cases of Paraguay and Bolivia, the Brühl Palace was thus unwilling to come away from the table without special settlement privileges, especially in the borderland region. Moreover, Warsaw did not seem too concerned with the financial side of the settlement projects in South

⁴⁴ "Zdzisław Kurnikowski to the Consulate in Asunción," June 6, 1939, 2/2210/53, Poselstwo RP w Buenos Aires, AAN.

⁴⁵ "Tadeusz Jarocki to the Consulate in Buenos Aires," July 19, 1939, 2/2210/53, Poselstwo RP w Buenos Aires, AAN.

⁴⁶ "Boliwia otwarta dla emigracji z Polski!," *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, February 13, 1939, 3-4.

America, either. Considered an entity created for special purposes, as opposed to a money-making machine, during the 1938/1939 fiscal period the MTO recorded a balance of 2,479,134,93 zł (~\$46,776,000), with its net losses equaling 39,723,39 zł (~\$749,000).⁴⁷ In fact, Skowroński argued that hopes for large profits from trade with South America amounted to “illusions,” given the large distance to Poland that greatly raised transportation costs. Furthermore, since the distance between the Iguazu region and the Polish diplomatic posts was likewise huge, making contact with the “colonies” difficult, Skowroński suggested that Warsaw might better spend its money on expanding existing plantations of cotton in the region instead of establishing new ones, or that it should consider dispatching “Ruthenians and Belarusians.”⁴⁸

By September 1939, the Brühl Palace had also considered other areas for Polish-Catholic settlement in the western hemisphere, although without engaging the MTO. In the years 1938–1939, Zarychta supported a Polish expedition that was sent to Nicaragua at the invitation of the Nicaraguan honorary consul in Warsaw, Stefan Czarnecki. President Anastasio Somoza García warmly welcomed the Polish delegation and encouraged it to send Christian agricultural settlers to Nicaragua, all the while soliciting reassurances that Warsaw would not send along any Jews; García hoped that experienced farmers would stimulate the country’s economy. The Emigration Division was not thrilled about the designated area between the Mico and Rama Rivers, however: its tropical climate and elevation supposedly allowed the cultivation of coffee, rice, and beans, but it was also a hothouse of malaria that had decimated a Danish settlement in the 1920s.⁴⁹ Beyond the Americas, moreover, in 1937 Zarychta commissioned the consulate in Batavia (Jakarta) in the Dutch East Indies to examine the prospect of channeling Polish-Catholic emigration to New

⁴⁷ “Bilans M.T.O. za rok 1938/1939,” 1939, 2/322/9840, MSZ, AAN.

⁴⁸ Jan Szembek, “Rozmowa z min. Skowrońskim,” February 28, 1938, 46, *Diariusz IV*.

⁴⁹ “Mieczysław Marchlewski to the Emigration Division,” February 3, 1939, 2/322/9827, MSZ, AAN.

Guinea. According to the few documents, the Dutch government was interested in exploring the area, where Polish farmers would grow cotton, and was willing to include Polish experts in an expedition planned to take place in the summer of 1938. The scheme did not seem to progress beyond the planning stage, however.⁵⁰ Lastly, in June 1939, Zarychta likewise became interested in the political status of Antarctica upon learning that President Roosevelt planned an American expedition to the area under Admiral Richard E. Byrd and Lincoln Ellsworth.⁵¹ By the outbreak of World War II, however, the Polish state had not established any colonies beyond the couple of settlements around Foz do Iguaçu.

Warsaw's Colonial Conglomerate for Africa

Mass settlement comprised only half of the Emigration Division's actions aiming to fulfill Beck's colonial agenda in practice. The other ten-year plan drafted in the first half of 1937 was strictly "colonial," or commercial, and, in its unidentified author's words, "complementary to our statements in the international arena." It outlined the ways in which a "network of plantations and trade agencies in the colonial area, mostly in Africa," would be established.⁵² The Polish diplomatic maneuvers to gain leverage in entities like the Permanent Mandates Commission set the acquisition concessions and privileges in Africa as their ultimate target. At the same time, the Brühl Palace would now also adopt a more realistic approach to eliminating the role of Western intermediaries in Poland's trade with Africa. In the first place, the "Ten-Year Colonial Plan" suggested launching a Gdynia–Africa–India shipping line and purchasing existing plantations from foreign companies or investing in their stocks.⁵³ In the second place, the Polish state would

⁵⁰ "The Project of Polish Settlement in New Guinea," 1938 1937, KOL.22/1, PISM.

⁵¹ R. Łepkowski, "Embassy in Washington to the Emigration Division," June 13, 1939, 2/322/9735, MSZ, AAN.

⁵² "Projekt 10 letniego planu kolonialnego," 1937, 1, 2/322/9585, MSZ, AAN.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 10–14.

create a joint-stock company, expand its consular network in Africa, and train future pioneers in commercial, agricultural, and managerial skills.⁵⁴ In order to fulfill the third objective, the state and its allies such as the LMiK would give “colonial scholarships” to talented children of merchants, industrialists, and farmers to pursue higher education in foreign schools.⁵⁵ Furthermore, an interdisciplinary program in Colonial and Migration Studies was instituted at the Free University (*Wolna Wszechnica*) in Warsaw, offering courses in history, law, geography, sociology, anthropology, commerce, political science, and foreign languages.⁵⁶ The total cost of all of these initiatives was estimated at 26,000,000 zł (~\$4,906,000).⁵⁷

The set of actions proposed in the first half of 1937 was a part of the larger process of reducing the LMiK’s role exclusively to propaganda in response to its failures in Liberia and Paraná, which the Brühl Palace judged as cavalier and responsible for the diplomatic rows with Washington and Rio de Janeiro. Most importantly, however, the LMiK’s initiatives absorbed large sums of public funds, as shown in the table below.

Table 2. Expenses of the Colonial Action Fund, 1932-1937

	zł	~\$
Paraná	340,147	64,180
Liberia	469,690	88,621
Central America	26,669.72	5,032
SS “Poznań”	22,529.65	4,251
Colonial Fellowships	7,087.96	1,337
Total	1,915,447.58	163,421

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At the same time, Warsaw hoped that less conspicuous and more carefully executed “colonial actions” with clandestine backing from the state would enhance Poland’s military and economic

⁵⁴ Ibid., 17–19.

⁵⁵ “Plan ufundowania stypendiów dla Polaków na studia w zagranicznych szkołach kolonialnych,” 1937, 2/322/9585, MSZ, AAN.

⁵⁶ “Statut 3-letniego Studium Migracyjno-Kolonialnego W.W.P. w Warszawie,” 1937, 2/322/9585, MSZ, AAN.

⁵⁷ “Projekt 10 letniego planu kolonialnego,” 20–21.

security at a time of rising geopolitical tensions. In June 1937, a special interministerial commission reiterated the points of the “Colonial Plan” related to raw materials, advising the government to import raw materials mostly from countries that offered advantages in terms of military cooperation and settlement, to establish special trading posts in the colonies, to limit the role of commercial intermediaries, to acquire concessions for mines and plantations, and to profit from existing colonial settlements and “entrepreneurship.”⁵⁸ Moreover, the commission proposed the creation of a unified state-supported entity that would coordinate the importation of raw materials and the introduction of a university curriculum in colonial matters. It was decided, furthermore, that Polish colonial pioneering would be carried out in full confidentiality.⁵⁹ The Brühl Palace acted upon these recommendations quite quickly. In early 1938, as a result of Drymmer’s mediation between the General Staff of the Army and the consular network facilitating trade with the colonial empires, an association called “Towarzystwo Importu Surowców Strategicznych” (TISSA) was created under Colonel Jan Kowalewski, a renowned cryptologist and intelligence officer, in order to facilitate the importation of raw materials considered “strategic” from both colonial and non-colonial territories.⁶⁰

The other state-sponsored entity erected to execute the interministerial recommendations was the strictly commercial partnership called “Zamorski Eksport-Import.” It was established in December 1938, at a time when the failure of the more demographic project in Madagascar became apparent, and was the fruit of a cooperation between the BGK’s colonial-banking section (*referat kolonialno-bankowy*) and private companies ranging from textile producers from Łódź to the

⁵⁸ “Niepodpisana notatka: ustalenia Komisji Migracyjno-Surowcowej w sprawie importu przez Polskę surowców,” June 1937, 443–44, doc. 167, PDD 1937.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 445.

⁶⁰ Wiktor Drymmer, *W służbie Polsce: wspomnienia żołnierza i państwowca z lat 1914–1947* (Kraków: Wingert, 2014), 220–21.

confectionary producer “E. Wedel.” Together, these companies and investors contributed a total of 105,000 zł (~\$20,000) in starting capital, a modest sum that was tripled in March 1939.⁶¹ By July 1939, the “Zamorski Eksport-Import” received orders worth 139,500 zł (~\$26,000) from West Africa, its region of focus.⁶² The partnership pledged to conduct trade without foreign intermediaries, to establish its own stores overseas, to exchange surplus exports for hard currency, to promote Gdynia as an international port, and to train future Polish cadres in “colonial” skills.⁶³ The “Zamorski Eksport-Import” was, in fact, a partnership deeply connected to the state. Drymmer decided that its agents could, after proper training, disguise themselves as special consular agents in areas where official Polish activities would otherwise appear suspicious to the Western powers.⁶⁴

At the same time, Zarychta was also in the process of brokering the formation of a partnership to exploit colonial raw materials in Africa, which featured colonial activists like Mieczysław Lepecki and Konrad Chmielewski, the erstwhile planter in Liberia.⁶⁵ In line with the old objective of creating a fiscal union, it was proposed that an emissions bank would work with this new partnership to introduce a substitute currency in its future concessions.⁶⁶ Completing this conglomerate was the Institute of Maritime and Tropical Hygiene (*Instytut Higieny Morskiej i Tropikalnej*), opened in Gdynia in May 1939 at the initiative of the Brühl Palace and in cooperation with the Jagiellonian University.⁶⁷ Since Western regulations often stopped doctors without appropriate training to travel to the tropics, the new institution was to stimulate domestic research

⁶¹ “Władysław Sokołowski to the Embassy in Washington,” May 31, 1938, 2/493/133, Konsulat Generalny RP w Nowym Jorku, AAN; Apoloniusz Zarychta, “Nr E.I.275-3/1,” March 28, 1939, 65010/12.4, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

⁶² “Sprawozdanie za miesiąc lipiec 1939 r.,” August 10, 1939, 2/322/9739, MSZ, AAN.

⁶³ “Program działalności spółki ‘Zamorski Eksport-Import,’” 1938, 2/322/4464, MSZ, AAN.

⁶⁴ Józef Zieliński, “Sprawozdanie z konferencji u Pana DDK, odbytej w Zakopanem dn. 29 grudnia 1938 r.,” January 5, 1939, 1, 2/322/9586, MSZ, AAN.

⁶⁵ “Apoloniusz Zarychta to Józef Potocki,” July 6, 1939, 2/322/9739, MSZ, AAN.

⁶⁶ “Zakres działania przedsiębiorstwa na terenie Afryki,” 1939, 2/322/9739, MSZ, AAN.

⁶⁷ “Zarządzenie Ministra Opieki Społecznej,” May 1939, 2/322/9753, MSZ, AAN.

in the field and to prepare physicians for future missions.⁶⁸ Furthermore, an Interdisciplinary Colonial Studies Program at the Jagiellonian University was supposed to start in the fall of 1939 to create a new cadre of colonial experts under the instruction of veterans like Jerzy Babecki and Jerzy Smoleński.⁶⁹

In tandem with the creation of this state-sponsored conglomerate, the Brühl Palace trained its future personnel through the program of “colonial scholarships,” judging candidates based on their age, health, and experience in the tropics. The final round of this scholarship contest featured men in their late twenties, mostly employees of state subsidiaries and private companies: Władysław Rudrof had worked for the “Żegluga Polska,” Zbigniew Knast was affiliated with the BGK, and Zbigniew Heliński had finished an economic school in Antwerp and initiated trade with Liberia after making contact with Léo Sajous in 1932.⁷⁰ At the same time, Jan Bartoszczyk, the LMiK’s former representative in Liberia, was immediately discarded due to his history of health problems while in the “Black Republic.”⁷¹ Furthermore, the nationality of the candidates could be questioned. In late 1938, the application of Eugeniusz Nowicki, a veterinarian looking to conduct research in Germany and France, was investigated because of his Russian origins and in spite of his proclamations of “Polishness,” apparent political disinterest, and experience with trade in animal products.⁷² By March 1939, Nowicki was ultimately nominated as a candidate to lead the Department of Protozoology at the Institute of Maritime and Tropical Hygiene.⁷³ Nevertheless, the

⁶⁸ Jan Szembek, “Nr. E.I.275-1/153,” January 14, 1938, 153, 2/322/9752, MSZ, AAN; “Notatka dla Pana D.D.K. w sprawie konferencji dotyczącej organizacji Instytutu Medycyny Morskiej i Tropikalnej w Gdyni,” February 1939, 2/322/9753, MSZ, AAN.

⁶⁹ “Program kursu medycyny i higieny tropikalnej,” June 1939, 2/503/893, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

⁷⁰ “Profiles of candidates for colonial agents,” circa 1938, 2/322/9740, MSZ, AAN.

⁷¹ “Apoloniusz Zarychta to the Industrial-Commercial Chamber in Gdynia,” February 14, 1939, 2/322/9740, MSZ, AAN.

⁷² “Eugeniusz Nowicki’s application for a colonial scholarship,” 1938, 2/322/9754, MSZ, AAN.

⁷³ “Eugeniusz Nowicki to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” March 9, 1939, 2/322/9754, MSZ, AAN.

episode demonstrated that Warsaw made sure that its expansion in Africa was carried out by ethnically Polish representatives. In any case, the fulfillment of the “Colonial Plan,” insofar as acquiring “colonial” skills was concerned, was also contingent upon Poland’s relations with its major allies, especially France. The LMiK had already appealed to the Agence Économique of French West Africa for permission to carry out colonial internships there in the first half of 1936.⁷⁴ Now, in the years 1937-1938, the Emigration Division planned to dispatch two agricultural engineers to the National Institute of Colonial Agronomy (*Institut National d’Agronomie Coloniale*) in Nogent-sur-Marne, France and another two to the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in British Trinidad.⁷⁵

In addition to training new personnel, the Brühl Palace also maintained an index of “Poles,” most of whom seemed to be Catholics, currently residing in Africa. According to the index from 1938, about fifty of these Poles lived in its sub-Saharan part, including Madagascar.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the foreign ministry made an attempt to rally Polish-Catholic missionaries to the cause of colonial expansion. At the end of November 1938, Józef Zieliński, the director of the Colonial Section of the Emigration Division, debated whether it would be possible to channel the direction of Polish missionary activity away from Asia, where Warsaw had fewer interests, toward Africa, where missions could receive subsidies from the state budget and from the LMiK. He pointed out, however, that a cooperation with Primate August Hlond and the religious orders was required for this project, in addition to marketing Africa as a more fertile ground for converting “pagans” than the “ancient civilizations” of Japan or China.⁷⁷ It is unclear to what extent any cooperation took

⁷⁴ “Pierre Laval to the Ministry of Colonies,” May 15, 1936, 68CPCOM/7, Série K-Afrique, Correspondance politique et commerciale, ADP.

⁷⁵ “Plan ufundowania stypendiów dla Polaków na studia w zagranicznych szkołach kolonialnych.”

⁷⁶ “Kartoteka Polaków przebywających w Afryce,” 1938, 2/322/9745, MSZ, AAN.

⁷⁷ Józef Zieliński, “Notatka dla Pana Naczelnika E.I. w sprawie działalności polskiego duchowieństwa misyjnego w Afryce,” November 22, 1938, 2/322/9744, MSZ, AAN.

place, but soon the *IKC* identified Kraków as the ideal location for the Interdisciplinary Colonial Studies Program, since the city had allegedly become a center of Catholic missionary efforts worldwide. According to the article, priests travelling to anywhere from Rhodesia to Sakhalin could now consult world-class physicians familiar with tropical conditions, such as Marian Gieszczykiewicz and Józef Latkowski.⁷⁸ In the same month (March 1939), moreover, the Consular Department asked the LMiK's "protector," Kazimierz Sosnkowski, to use his military influence to persuade the General Staff and Ministry of Military Affairs to register officers with previous colonial experience, to send others to complete colonial internships, and to train auxiliary companies for military activities in the tropics.⁷⁹ In the summer of 1939, the Brühl Palace also considered the possibility of exploiting French colonial mining and agricultural concessions granted to Tomasz Jełowicki, a Polish engineer in Ivory Coast listed in its colonial index.⁸⁰

Regardless of personnel training, Poland's commercial expansion in the colonial world was always largely a function of the status of Gdynia as regional trade hub, which helped in predicting



Figure 3. The port of Gdynia. The "Colonial Plan" of the late 1930s was a return to the LMiK's economic expansionism. Source: NAC 1-G-4823.

whether arranging direct shipping lines to different parts Africa made sense economically. (Figure 3) In February 1936, for example, the Brühl Palace collected reports concerning the trade between West Africa and the countries that shipped much of their cargo through Gdynia, including the Baltic states, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Romania. It was established that, in combination with Poland's increasing trade with the

⁷⁸ L. T., "Kraków ogniskiem studiów kolonialnych," *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, March 2, 1939, 18.

⁷⁹ "Notatka dla Pana D.D.K. do rozmowy z Panem Gen. Sosnkowskim," March 18, 1939, 5, 2/322/9847, MSZ, AAN.

⁸⁰ Henryk Stebelski, "Embassy in Paris to the Emigration Division," August 10, 1939, 2/322/9756, MSZ, AAN.

French Equatorial Africa, the sums exchanged between these countries and West Africa warranted the launching of a new line from Gdynia to the region.⁸¹ Insofar as Romania was concerned, moreover, the Gdynia-America Shipping Lines (GAL) operated its geopolitically strategic and successful Palestinian line out of the port at Constanța, which, statesmen hoped, could become Poland's alternative source of Western shipments at wartime. In the late 1930s, Polish and Romanian statesmen alike pitched the idea of building a canal connecting the Vistula and Prut Rivers, which would create a navigable waterway connecting the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and stand as the Polish-Romanian alternative to the German Rhein-Main-Danube waterway network.⁸² Warsaw could only hope to carry out these plans in the long-term, however. In the meantime, Polish officials believed that the more realistic way to fulfill the "Colonial Plan" was stimulating trade around the world, which was not impressive. In 1938, according to international estimates, Poland's exports accounted for only about a tenth of Germany's and three-fourths of Czechoslovakia's, placing the country only at the twenty-fourth place in the global ranking of export powers.⁸³ Once again, Poland's natural partner in this respect was its French ally.

Increasing Commercial Exchange with France

It has already been established that the LMiK attempted to nest its commercial expansion in French colonialism in the mid-1930s. In 1936, as the government gradually took over the LMiK, these efforts intensified and targeted concrete policies, as opposed to being concerned with establishing lasting settlements in French colonies. Instead, the LMiK lobbied the French for the introduction of countertrade, a system whereby countries exchanged goods without the use of hard

⁸¹ Gustaw Potworowski, "P.I.Mor/362-a/21/36. Wymiana handlowa państw bałtyckich i Europy Środkowej z Afryką Zachodnią," February 14, 1936, 2/322/2506, MSZ, AAN.

⁸² P.W., "Droga wodna Bałtyk - Morze Czarne," *Drogi Polskie* 3, no. 5 (May 1939): 311–13.

⁸³ "La lutte sur le marché mondial," *Geopress* 212, no. 9 (June 1939).

currency. In March 1936, senator Jan Dębski proposed the introduction of countertrade between Poland and the French colonies to the Economic Agency of Madagascar (*Agence Économique de Madagascar*) so that products imported from the “great island” into Poland would equal respective Polish exports in value.⁸⁴ His proposal was rejected, however, with the French explaining that such a system would have to be introduced at the level of the metropole.⁸⁵ This was not the only Polish colonial deal that received a negative response from French colonial authorities at the time. The LMiK’s secretary Wiesław Czermiński and the Warsaw-based French engineer Michel Hugon offered sending free issues of *Morze* to Madagascar in exchange for local French trade bulletins. The Ministry of Colonies was not interested in Polish-language journals, however, since few Frenchmen could read them.⁸⁶ The French also noticed the propagandistic nature of *Morze* and suspected that colonial aspirations lurked behind the proposition, which made them less eager to accept the exchange.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, a member of the Superior Council of Overseas France (*Conseil supérieur de la France d’Outremer*) remarked, in reaction to a special issue of the Polish monthly dedicated to the French Empire, that “it is rare to find friends of France who would like to spread propaganda in favor of our colonies in a disinterested manner.”⁸⁸

⁸⁴ “Jan Dębski to the Director of the Agence Économique in Madagascar,” March 27, 1936, 110COL 843/2257, Agence économique de la France d’outre-mer, Ministère des Colonies, ANOM.

⁸⁵ “Créhangé to Jan Dębski,” August 3, 1936, 110COL 843/2257, Agence économique de la France d’outre-mer, Ministère des Colonies, ANOM.

⁸⁶ “Governorship of Madagascar to the Director of the Agence Économique in Madagascar,” June 22, 1936, 110COL 843/2257, Agence économique de la France d’outre-mer, Ministère des Colonies, ANOM.

⁸⁷ “General Director of the Union Coloniale Française to Banssillon from the Association Industrielle, Commerciale et Agricole de Lyon,” May 14, 1936, 100 APOM 640, Comité central français pour l’Outre-Mer, Archives privées, ANOM.

⁸⁸ “Georges Schwob d’Hericourt to the Director of the Agence Économique in Madagascar,” February 14, 1936, 110COL 843/2257, Agence économique de la France d’outre-mer, Ministère des Colonies, ANOM.

Within a couple of months, the Brühl Palace started to exploit the rise of the Popular Front to shift the balance of Polish-French commercial exchange in its favor. (Figure 4) In the first place,



Figure 4. An LMiK colonial display, including a poster showing the directions of Poland's colonial trade. Source: NAC 1-P-325-4.

Warsaw abrogated the Polish-French trade of 1924 to open the door for a new one, which resulted in a preliminary trade agreement of July 20, 1936.⁸⁹ According to the Polish consul in Marseille,

Władysław Obrębski, this new agreement was an opportunity for Polish exporters: the French metropolitan exports, despite receiving highly favorable tariff rates, could not fulfill the demand for certain products in many parts of the empire, now open to Polish penetration. Whereas the original Polish-French trade treaty from 1924, in combination with international regulations signed at Versailles, had granted the Polish state the highest trading privilege in many French mandates and colonies, this advantage was now extended to the most developed territories manifesting the highest demand for European products: Algeria, Indochina, Madagascar, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Guiana, and Réunion. Obrębski pointed out, however, that, while taxing them at a minimal rate, the French still assigned low quotas to Polish products exported to the colonies, which was a problem that was not addressed in the agreement.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Anna Ambrochowicz-Gajownik, "Polsko-francuskie stosunki gospodarcze w okresie międzywojennym: nowe postulaty badawcze," *Przegląd Środkowo-Wschodni*, no. 1 (2016): 197–98.

⁹⁰ Witold Obrębski, "Consulate in Marseille to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," September 23, 1936, 2/464/2/23, Konsulat RP w Marsylii, AAN.

Nonetheless, almost a year later, on May 22, 1937, Warsaw and Paris signed a completely new trade treaty centered around the question of colonial exchange.⁹¹ In a concession to Warsaw, the new treaty set the upper limit of all French exports, metropolitan and colonial, at 80% of the value of Polish products imported into France.⁹² Moreover, the treaty included a clause that asked Paris to “look favorably” upon the “establishment of Polish emigrants in the territories of French colonies and protectorates.”⁹³ In a letter to colonial governors, the French ministry of colonies noted that the treaty allowed Warsaw better means of paying its debts to Paris and suggested that it was now in the empire’s interest to favor Polish exports to French territories to increase the total rate of exchange.⁹⁴ In turn, the French colonial authorities studied the possibilities of intensifying trade with Poland, generally noting positive prospects. The governorship of French West Africa, for instance, observed that Polish exports to this territory, which consisted mostly of vegetables, oils, textiles, and furniture, totaled 5,921,000 fr. At the same time, French West Africa’s own exports to Poland, although yet non-existent, could increase through a closer cooperation with metropolitan trading companies, but the latter would need to “adapt their methods to the needs of commerce with the countries of Central Europe.”⁹⁵

In any case, the treaty of May 22, 1937 did not result in the elimination of hard currency from Polish-French trade, which was Warsaw’s deepest desire. In 1939, the French delegate who was sent to Poland, Jacquemin-Verquet, examined the new trade opportunities stemming from the

⁹¹ M. Chojecki, “Secretary of the Franco-Polish Chamber of Commerce to the French colonial authorities,” January 20, 1937, 100 APOM 640, Comité central français pour l’Outre-Mer, Archives privées, ANOM.

⁹² “Ministry of Colonies to Governors-General, Commissioner of the Republic in African Territories under Mandate, and Administrators of St. Pierre Island and Miquelon,” June 4, 1937, 4101COL725, Direction des Affaires économiques et du plan, Ministère des Colonies, ANOM.

⁹³ “Protocole secret. Etablissement dans les Colonies,” May 3, 1937, 4101COL725, Direction des Affaires économiques et du plan, Ministère des Colonies, ANOM.

⁹⁴ “Ministry of Colonies to Governors-General, Commissioner of the Republic in African Territories under Mandate, and Administrators of St. Pierre Island and Miquelon.”

⁹⁵ “Governor of French West Africa to the Minister of Colonies,” November 15, 1937, 4101COL725, Direction des Affaires économiques et du plan, Ministère des Colonies, ANOM.

Polish-French rapprochement. In his report, the envoy noted that, while both sides could increase their respective exports, Warsaw continued to demand the introduction of countertrade, with finished Polish products like furniture and fabrics exchange for French raw materials like wood and steel. Jacquemin-Verquet remarked that implementing such a system might be profitable to the empire but would require creating a new trade office in Warsaw and potentially devaluing the Polish currency, whose strength made increasing imports from Poland relatively expensive for France.⁹⁶ Nor did the treaty address the question of direct trade between the two powers. In November 1938, Mańkowski informed the “Zamorski Eksport-Import” that liberating Poland’s trade from foreign intermediaries was extremely difficult in West Africa because of the complex interconnected system of French tariffs, British merchants, and local indigenous producers. According to the consul, the newly established partnership would need to inject itself into that system slowly at first to aspire for a more independent position much later.⁹⁷ Still, the Brühl Palace’s constant negotiations for better trade conditions with France was merely one of the disclosed ways in which it struggled to fulfill the “Colonial Plan,” most of which was carried out in a rather clandestine manner under the auspices of Drymmer’s expanding consular network.

Consular Reconnaissance

In April 1937, Drymmer asked his consul in London, Karol Poznański, about the possibility of expanding Poland’s network of diplomatic posts in British colonies and dominions as a gateway to colonial expansion.⁹⁸ In response, Poznański sent a list of areas where honorary consulates could be established at little cost and where shipping lines could dispatch their cargo: Gold Coast,

⁹⁶ Jacquemin-Verguet, “Le marché polonais pour les produits coloniaux français,” 1939, 9–10, 2/322/9593, MSZ, AAN.

⁹⁷ “Józef Mańkowski to ‘Zamorski Eksport-Import,’” November 19, 1938, 2/322/4464, MSZ, AAN.

⁹⁸ “Wiktor Drymmer to Karol Poznański,” April 6, 1937, 2/503/1312, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

Nigeria, Australia, New Zealand, India, northern Borneo, Jamaica, and Trinidad.⁹⁹ In the same year, Zarychta delegated Jan Koziński (Karski) to join Poznański as a consular intern in London. In the British capital, Koziński coordinated the activities of the student “Liga” (League) meant to promote the Polish point of view in British society, including its colonial agenda, at the time Beck still hoped for multilateral solutions to what his cabinet constructed as Poland’s demographic-economic problem.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, however, the politically stable British empire never became a major focus point of the Brühl Palace’s colonial expansion. Instead, Drymmer delegated commercial agents to examine more politically precarious areas under the control of lesser colonial powers, which was a task they would pursue under the auspices of local Polish diplomatic posts. In particular, the director of the Consular Department dispatched Jerzy Giżycki to Italian East Africa, the newly created territory that encompassed former Ethiopia, while directing Zygmunt Brudziński, a brother of the Polish economic advisor in Liberia, to Portuguese Angola and Belgian Congo.

In July 1937, after spending a couple of months being trained with Poznański in London, Giżycki assumed the post of vice-consul in Haile Selassie’s erstwhile capital of Addis-Ababa, from where the agent was supposed to carry out a reconnaissance of the country, paying special attention to the practical implementation of Italy’s colonial policies regarding settlement and raw materials.¹⁰¹ His reports, however, disappointed the Brühl Palace, since the Polish envoy identified the former Ethiopian Empire as a space where white settlement was impossible due to the economic crisis stemming from wartime destruction. In January 1938, Giżycki repeatedly asked

⁹⁹ “Karol Poznański to Wiktor Drymmer,” April 30, 1937, 2/503/1312, Ambasada RP w Londynie, AAN.

¹⁰⁰ Waldemar Piasecki, *Jan Karski, jedno życie: kompletna opowieść*, vol. I (1914-1939) Madagaskar (Kraków: Insignis, 2015), 857; “Ogólny plan szkolenia i przygotowania kadr kolonialnych,” 1937, 3, 2/322/9585, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁰¹ Wiktor Drymmer, “Pismo dyrektora Departamentu Konsularnego do ambasady w Rzymie na temat zadań dla nowo mianowanego wicekonsula honorowego w Addis Abebie,” July 15, 1937, 488–89, doc. 186, PDD 1937.

Warsaw for a raise, pointing to the alleged “orgy of prices” that plagued the country alongside high costs of labor, with workers imported from the neighboring Sudan.¹⁰² He described the Ethiopian landscape as quite apocalyptic, mentioning the frequent sight of “automobile cemeteries” full of burned and broken cars lining the main roads.¹⁰³ Three months later, Giżycki informed the consulate in Rome about the necessity to install his office at the rather “primitive” apartment rented from the Polish engineer Wiesław Knake, given the housing market in the devastated capital. He suggested, moreover, that Poland’s minimal economic contact with Italian East Africa did not warrant establishing a permanent consulate in Addis-Ababa at the gigantic cost that it would entail.¹⁰⁴ In June and July 1938, responding to the possibility of being transferred to British East Africa, the diplomat argued that his accreditation in Addis-Ababa, which was accessible via airplane, should be maintained, but once again complained about his living, traveling, and working conditions and asked to be given the full title of consul in the Italian or British colonies.¹⁰⁵

Nor did the Polish agent convey optimistic information about the course of Italian settlement in East Africa, pointing out that local Italian leaders faced large logistical difficulties and expressed indifference to the Polish ambitions in the region. In January 1938, for example, Giżycki toured the province of Amhara, in whose mountain plateau region around the town of Gondar Mussolini planned to locate colonists from his native Romagna. The Polish delegate reported to Zarychta that driving to the remote Gondar was one of the hardest journeys that he had ever undertaken but also that describing his full experience would require returning to Poland and

¹⁰² “Jerzy Giżycki to Apoloniusz Zarychta,” January 21, 1938, 3, A.61/19a, Polish Consulate General in Rome, PISM.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ “Jerzy Giżycki to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” April 4, 1938, A.61/19a, Polish Consulate General in Rome, PISM.

¹⁰⁵ “Jerzy Giżycki to the Emigration Division,” July 26, 1938, A.61/19a, Polish Consulate General in Rome, PISM.

filing an oral report. It was not to be an optimistic assessment, however.¹⁰⁶ In response to letters from Polish women hoping to marry rich Italian colonists in the region, moreover, Giżycki communicated that his diplomatic post was not a “matrimonial agency,” that only Italian women could hope for assistance in relocating to Africa, and that only foreign white women in Ethiopia worked as actresses and ballet dancers for Italian companies.¹⁰⁷ In fact, according to the Italians, Ethiopia was not a place for Polish men or women. In March 1938, Giżycki had an audience with the Italian viceroy of Ethiopia, Amedeo, Duke of Aosta, during which the Polish delegate expressed his hope that upcoming Polish-Italian negotiations in Rome would result not only in the extension of the trade agreement between the two countries to Italian East Africa but also in securing a compensatory mechanism for Poland’s limited export capacity. Amedeo confessed his complete ignorance in economic matters but still dismissed Giżycki’s later assurance that Poland understood Italy’s demographic concerns and need for colonial expansion: “Yes, but you have very fertile lands to your east! You will always get along with the Germans if you do not get in the way of their interests... including those in the east.”¹⁰⁸

Despite such clear rebuttals from Italy, the Brühl Palace remained vigilant for opportunities in order to jump on the bandwagon of Italian colonialism if any additional Italian settlement projects were initiated. In November 1938, Drymmer asked relevant embassies to examine the Italian attempt to redirect selected Italian emigrants from France and Brazil to form small groups of pioneers in Africa, suggesting that it might pave the way for increasing Polish emigration to Libya and Ethiopia.¹⁰⁹ The Italian initiative yielded meager results, however. In March 1939, the

¹⁰⁶ “Jerzy Giżycki to Apoloniusz Zarychta,” 3.

¹⁰⁷ “Jerzy Giżycki to Regina Rybicka,” May 10, 1938, A.61/19a, Polish Consulate General in Rome, PISM.

¹⁰⁸ “Jerzy Giżycki to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” March 11, 1938, 2, A.61/19a, Polish Consulate General in Rome, PISM.

¹⁰⁹ “Wiktor Drymmer to selected embassies,” November 30, 1938, 2/322/9762, MSZ, AAN.

embassy in Paris reported that few Italians decided to abandon the cultural and economic privileges of living in France for the uncertainty of life in Africa.¹¹⁰ However, the economic situation in Ethiopia, which was considered as the major factor that could potentially increase immigration into the country and generate the political relaxation necessary for foreign settlements, did not improve over the course of the next few months. In May 1939, an analyst at the Brühl Palace advised against sending any additional commercial or consular representatives to Italian East Africa due to the highly prohibitive tariff regime and unstable political situation.¹¹¹ Two months later, the economic specialist at the Polish embassy in Rome, Roman Mazurkiewicz, sent detailed trade statistics to Warsaw, which demonstrated that Italy's exports to all of its colonies – Eritrea, Ethiopia, Libya, and Somalia – far exceeded imports, since “the metropole delivers everything, ranging from food stuffs to machines required for the industry.” Furthermore, the revenue of the Italian East Africa accounted for only 25% of its total budget financed from the metropole.¹¹² Since Ethiopia turned out to be as an inauspicious space for Poland's colonial expansion, Giżycki and his wife Krystyna Skarbek, about to become a famous British spy, moved to Kenya prior to the outbreak of World War II.¹¹³

In the meantime, Zygmunt Brudziński had been sent to Portuguese West Africa (Angola) and Belgian Congo, where the Ministry of Industry and Commerce hoped to find inexpensive ways to acquire certain fibers, oils, and minerals.¹¹⁴ After arriving in Benguela on March 2, 1937, the Polish agent made contact with the Polish honorary consul, Manuel de Barosso Mendes, and proceeded to tour the local port, department stores, and large sugar cane plantations in the region

¹¹⁰ Wiesław Dąbrowski, “Embassy in Paris to Wiktor Drymmer,” March 2, 1939, 2/322/9762, MSZ, AAN.

¹¹¹ A.M. Jezierska, “Imperium Kolonialne Włoch. Krótka analiza rynku,” May 1939, 2/322/9739, MSZ, AAN.

¹¹² “Roman Mazurkiewicz to the Emigration Division,” July 10, 1939, 2/322/9735, MSZ, AAN.

¹¹³ Clare Mulley, *The Spy Who Loved: The Secrets and Lives of Christine Granville* (Macmillan, 2013), 17–32.

¹¹⁴ “Plan badań kolonii afrykańskich powierzony p. Zygmuntowi Brudzińskiemu,” 1937, 8, 65010/3.20, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

between the colonial capital and Lobito.¹¹⁵ In the first place, Brudziński sent Warsaw reports regarding the possibilities of increasing trade through Angola's ports, including statistics, rules and regulations, and information about their technological advancement.¹¹⁶ According to him, the European demand for goods like coffee and cotton had increased steadily since 1931, accelerating Angola's economic growth. At the same time, Lisbon continued to treat the country in a highly "colonial" fashion, forcing it to export unfinished products, limiting foreign investment through currency restrictions, and forbidding the construction of industrial plants like grain mills. Brudziński noted, however, that all major European powers still managed to export large quantities of goods to Angola. In his opinion, Poland could likewise introduce paper, cement, iron, textile, wood, and chemical products to the local market as long as it conducted an extremely careful process of selection, labeling, marketing, and delivery.¹¹⁷ He wrote that an exhibition of Polish product samples should be installed in Benguela, which Mendes could facilitate.¹¹⁸ In September 1937, Brudziński also informed the State Export Institute that Angola had recently terminated its trade relations with Czechoslovakia and imposed high tariffs against Japan, which created a window of opportunity for Poland to market its products, especially textiles, samples of which Warsaw was asked to send immediately.¹¹⁹

Brudziński was relatively hopeful about the possibilities of establishing trading posts and plantations in the Portuguese territory. He deemed that, despite the continuing presence of tropical diseases like malaria and elephantiasis, Angola was hospitable to long-term European settlement of administrators along the coast and farmers working their own plots in the interior, especially in

¹¹⁵ "Zygmunt Brudziński to the Legation in Lisbon," March 3, 1937, 65010/3.20, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA; "Zygmunt Brudziński to the Legation in Lisbon," April 3, 1937, 65010/3.20, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹¹⁶ "Raport nr. 2," March 9, 1937, 65010/3.20, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹¹⁷ "Raport nr. 4," April 14, 1937, 65010/3.20, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹¹⁸ "Zygmunt Brudziński to the Legation in Lisbon," April 20, 1937, 65010/3.20, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹¹⁹ "Zygmunt Brudziński to the State Export Institute," September 24, 1937, 2/322/9747, MSZ, AAN.

the country's littoral and high plateau regions.¹²⁰ In consequence, the Polish envoy sent reports about companies operating concessions in Angola that Polish capital could infiltrate or from which strategically important territory could be purchased. One of them was the “Companhia de Cabinda,” which occupied itself with the production of coffee, cacao, and olive oil in the exclave province of Cabinda located in the northern Congo and Mayombe regions. Based in Lisbon, the company had incurred a net loss of £500,000 since its creation in 1903.¹²¹ Brudziński, however, deemed its concessions of more than 1,300 sq. km as full of economic potential, given the virgin forests of mahogany, ebony, and other highly desired woods that grew in Cabinda. He also argued that most of the firm's losses stemmed from its abandonment of agriculture for the sake of trade and that its situation allegedly improved after its return to farming. The “Companhia de Cabinda” looked for foreign investors, the Polish agent signaled, since its main Belgian shareholder was planning to sell its stocks.¹²² Ultimately, the Brühl Palace did not seem to have invested in the firm, but the episode demonstrated that Polish expansion in Angola would be an expansion of capital.

Lastly, in the late spring of 1937 Brudziński was dispatched to examine the possibility of rallying the Polish community around the mission of Quipeio in the Humabo province to the cause of colonial expansion. He reported that only ten Polish nationals remained at Quipeio, distributed between the five plantations listed below:

Table 3. The Polish Plantations around Quipeio, Angola as of June 1937

Name	Owner	Status	Area (sq. km)	Value (zł)
“Boa Serra”	Michał Zamoyski	definitive	6	120,000-150,000
“Sanaive”	Tadeusz Dekański	provisionary	3	72,115
“Maria-Teresa”	Zygmunt Gebethner	definitive	16.5	minimal
“Kissala”	Jerzy Rodziewicz	provisionary	1	minimal
“Cherra”	Roman Jesionowski	provisionary	3	–5,528

¹²⁰ “Raport nr. 3,” April 3, 1937, 65010/3.20, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹²¹ “Karol Dubicz-Penther to Wiktor Drymmer,” May 26, 1937, 65010/12.1, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹²² “Raport nr. 8,” July 22, 1937, 8, 65010/12.1, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

Brudziński described the state of the plantations as altogether meager, given the initial financial unpreparedness of their owners and the dearth of experimental agricultural stations in Angola that could help local farmers deal with plant and animal diseases. Most importantly, however, the Polish envoy identified the mutual distrust and antipathies that prevented the planters from working together.¹²³ In effect, Gebethner's "Maria-Teresa" and Rodziewicz's "Kissala" presented little value, with their owners living off family remittances from Poland. Likewise, Jesionowski's failing plantation "Cherra" would be lost within months if the Polish government or the LMiK did not decide to intervene financially. Even the most successful of the plantations, Zamoyski's "Boa Serra," experienced financial difficulties that would become serious if the Portuguese refused to allow the count to import additional capital from Poland.¹²⁴ Otherwise, Brudziński concluded, the Polish community was in no condition to assist Warsaw in its colonial designs.

The Brühl Palace took appropriate actions to change this status quo, however. Serving as a mediator between the conflicted planters, Brudziński initiated the creation of the "Union of Polish Planters in Angola" and arranged for its first meeting to take place on June 13, 1937 at "Boa Serra." According to the protocol from the meeting, the newly established association was to apply to become a member of the World Union of Poles from Abroad (*Światowy Związek Polaków z Zagranicy*, or *Światpol*), an international association that promoted the cooperation between Poland and its diaspora communities, and asked the Polish Legation in Lisbon for assistance in regulating its status with the Portuguese authorities. Zamoyski, Dekański, and Rodziewicz

¹²³ "Raport nr. 5," June 22, 1937, 1–2, 65010/12.1, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2–8.

constituted a temporary commission that would represent the union in the meantime.¹²⁵ In response, Polish officials promised its full readiness to meet the planters' request.¹²⁶

Brudziński was pleased to have initiated a way to end the “quarrels and mutual malice that have already done so much bad in Angola and have created such a bad opinion for Poles in this area.” He hoped that, while Polish planters would likely continue to fail to cooperate with one another, at least they would stop undermining each other and scaring newcomers.¹²⁷ By June 1938, moreover, thanks to the LMiK's mediation, the Polish honorary consul Mendes had regulated Jesionowski's debts, secured the survival of “Cherra,” and placed it under his own management. Mendes informed Jesionowski about having made new land surveys and having planted wheat, potatoes, and Arabica coffee.¹²⁸ More good news followed, at least from the perspective of the Polish government. The right-wing shift of the government in Warsaw slowly gained the sympathy of the Polish conservatives in Angola. In March 1938, Zamoyski, upon hearing the news of Lithuania's surrender to Poland's diplomatic ultimatum, wrote to the legation in Lisbon: “Long live Poland, long live Marshal Śmigły-Rydz, long-live minister Beck!”¹²⁹ Furthermore, by the outbreak of World War II, one of Poland's largest coffee producers, “Pluton,” had started to import much of its supply directly from the Polish planters in Quipeio, and the “Zamorski Eksport-Import” had dispatched a representative to increase its miniscule exports to Angola.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ Zygmunt Brudziński, “Protokół zebrania organizacyjnego Polaków w Angoli,” June 13, 1937, 65010/12.14, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹²⁶ “Legation in Lisbon to the Union of Polish Planters in Angola,” July 26, 1937, 65010/12.14, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹²⁷ “Raport nr. 5,” 9.

¹²⁸ “Manuel de Barroso Mendes to Roman Jesionowski,” June 6, 1938, 65010/12.2, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹²⁹ “Michał Zamoyski to Karol Dubicz-Penther,” March 19, 1938, 65010/12.2, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹³⁰ Kordian Tarasiewicz, *Kawa po warszawsku. Dzieje firmy “Pluton”* (Warsaw: Gospodarczy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1971), 144–45; “Industrial-Commercial Chamber in Sosnowiec to the Legation in Lisbon,” June 15, 1939, 65010/12.4, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA; “Sprawozdanie za miesiąc lipiec 1939 r.”

The Portuguese reacted negatively to the Polish efforts to penetrate Angola, just as they did at the beginning of the decade. In December 1937, the under-secretary of state in the Portuguese foreign office, Sampaio, informed the Polish delegate in Lisbon, Karol Dubicz-Penther, about Brudziński's alleged altercation with the governor of Angola, António Lopes Mateus, and asked for his removal from Portuguese territory. Dubicz-Penther agreed to the request but, pretending to wish to give Portuguese "additional satisfaction," asked Sampaio to show him proof that the incident took place so that Warsaw could properly punish Brudziński. In fact, the Polish delegate in Lisbon suspected that Salazar exaggerated or manufactured the affair in response to recent attacks against Poland's colonial aspirations in the press.¹³¹ In January 1938, as Brudziński was moved to the Belgian Congo, Dubicz-Penther reported to the Emigration Division that the Polish agent's precarious situation had likely been the result of renewed gossip that Warsaw looked to use Angola as a dumping ground for Jews. This Dubicz-Penther described as a "false way of presenting Polish colonial aspirations" that had been disseminated in pro-German newspapers ever since Beck's launching of his colonial agenda in Geneva in the fall of 1936.¹³² In a letter sent to his wife, Brudziński himself pointed out that his unofficial title of a "consular agent" made his work difficult, especially after the official enunciation of Poland's colonial aspirations.¹³³

In the Belgian Congo, Brudziński continued to use the cover of a commercial agent to examine the possibilities of colonial expansion¹³⁴ In April 1938, he toured the lower part of the country, including the ports of Boma and Matadi and the coffee- and cacao-growing area of Mayomba.¹³⁵ The Polish envoy reported his inability to evaluate "matters of special nature,"

¹³¹ "Karol Dubicz-Penther to Wiktor Drymmer," December 20, 1937, 2/322/9747, MSZ, AAN.

¹³² "Karol Dubicz-Penther to the Emigration Division," January 20, 1938, 65010/12.2, Poselstwo (Portugal), HILA.

¹³³ "List p. Brudzińskiego do p. Brudzińskiej," February 11, 1938, 2/322/9747, MSZ, AAN.

¹³⁴ Apoloniusz Zarychta, "Nr. E.I.275-6/8," February 11, 1938, 8, 2/322/9747, MSZ, AAN.

¹³⁵ "Zygmunt Brudziński to the Consulate in Antwerp," April 6, 1938, 2/322/9747, MSZ, AAN.

however, until after his tour of the entire country was complete,¹³⁶ but his further journey was postponed for “reasons independent of me” and kept him stranded in Léopoldville.¹³⁷ Brudziński was never able to leave the city to complete his mission: in August 1938, he suffered a car accident that injured him and killed his passenger, an officer of the Force Publique, Dupuis, as well as the driver of the other vehicle, a French consul Morracchini.¹³⁸ Brudziński recovered fast from his injuries but was transferred back to Poland in the late fall to have his broken jaw treated.¹³⁹ Nonetheless, his return to the Congo became impossible, since Morracchini’s widow had started a court case against him that ultimately established his partial responsibility for the accident and forced him to pay compensation to the litigator.¹⁴⁰ In the meantime, Kazimierz Zagórski, the mysterious photographer resident in Léopoldville, suggested to the Brühl Palace that Brudziński suffered prejudice from the Belgian court because, in contrast to France, Poland did not have an official representation in the Congo.¹⁴¹ The Emigration Division noted, however, that Zagórski simply wished to reapply for the position of Poland’s honorary consul in the Belgian Congo.¹⁴² Against the photographer’s wishes, Warsaw did not dispatch any more agents to the Congo, as the focus of its colonial expansion shifted southeast.

Infiltrating Mozambique

The Brühl Palace’s interest in southeastern Africa stemmed from the successful work of the Polish consulate in Cape Town under Jan Majewski, a skilled agent responsible for a dramatic increase in trade between Poland and the Union of South Africa in the late 1930s. According to

¹³⁶ “Zygmunt Brudziński to the Consulate in Antwerp,” May 5, 1938, 2/322/9747, MSZ, AAN.

¹³⁷ “Zygmunt Brudziński to the Consulate in Antwerp,” July 15, 1938, 2/322/9747, MSZ, AAN.

¹³⁸ “Consulate in Antwerp to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” August 25, 1938, 2/322/9747, MSZ, AAN.

¹³⁹ “Consulate in Brussels to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” October 11, 1938, 2/322/9747, MSZ, AAN; “Notatka dla p. D.D.K.,” October 28, 1938, 2/322/9747, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁴⁰ “Transcript of court proceedings against Zygmunt Brudziński,” January 23, 1939, 2/322/9747, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁴¹ “Kazimierz Zagórski to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” October 12, 1938, 2/322/9747, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁴² “Nr.E.I.275-6/48,” September 9, 1938, 48, 2/322/9747, MSZ, AAN.

one of his assistants, Zygmunt Fudakowski, Majewski possessed a commercial instinct that allowed him to exploit international affairs to the advantage of Polish exporters, mostly producers of textiles, steel, furniture, preserved, and liquors. In 1938, for example, after another in a series of British miners' strikes, the consul managed to replace the high-quality British coal imported into the Union with a Silesian equivalent. Notwithstanding Majewski's talents, however, it was also the services of a Polish-Jewish intermediary Yehiel Nahari Międzyrzecki that greatly contributed to the Polish success in penetrating the markets of South Africa.¹⁴³

The partnership "Międzyrzecki" functioned in symbiosis with the Brühl Palace, with which it split global markets: the "Zamorski Eksport-Import" operated in West Africa and Madagascar, while the Polish-Jewish intermediary took south and southeastern Africa.¹⁴⁴ Starting in 1937, the consulate in Cape Town frequently lodged Międzyrzecki, supplied him with all necessary legal and linguistic assistance, and made sure to enable his stay in the Union despite the country's own anti-Semitic immigration restrictions.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, the Polish-Jewish intermediary worked to minimize the negative effects of those anti-Semitic incidents in Poland whose echoes reached Jews in South Africa.¹⁴⁶ Międzyrzecki also confirmed the thesis that foreign companies formed cartels that Polish competitors could only break in the field, which the colonial milieu repeated like a mantra throughout the interwar period.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Zygmunt Fudakowski, "Strzępy Wspomnień" 1996, 23–29, KOL.745/3, Fudakowski Family Files, PISM.

¹⁴⁴ "Notatka dla Pana Naczelnika Wydziału E.I. w sprawie ewent. działalności kolonialnej pp. Przedpeńskiego i płk. Kowalewskiego," June 13, 1939, 2/322/9739, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁴⁵ "Jan Majewski to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," April 29, 1937, 2/322/3323, MSZ, AAN; "Jan Majewski to the Consulate General in London," May 2, 1938, 2/322/3324, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁴⁶ "Jan Majewski to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," July 8, 1937, 2/322/3323, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁴⁷ Yehiel Nahari Międzyrzecki, "Sprawozdanie dla Ministerstwa Przemysłu i Handlu, Państwowego Instytutu Eksportowego przy Ministerstwie Przemysłu i Handlu, oraz Izby Przemysłowo-Handlowej w Warszawie z działalności mojej na terenie Unii Południowo-Afrykańskiej w czasie od 15/III/1937 r. do 29/IV/1938 r.," June 18, 1938, 8, 2/322/9758, MSZ, AAN; "Yehiel Nahari Międzyrzecki to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce," 1938, 2/322/9758, MSZ, AAN.

By the end of 1938, the commercial expansion of the “Międzyrzecki” partnership spread to the neighboring British and Portuguese colonies. In May 1938, for example, Majewski reported that Międzyrzecki had struck lucrative deals in Southern Rhodesia, with which Poland now had a “greatly positive trade ratio.”¹⁴⁸ In July 1938, in a report for the State Export Institute, Międzyrzecki predicted that Poland’s annual exports to the British territory could reach as much as 2,500,000 zł (~\$472,000).¹⁴⁹ In addition, the creeping annexation of the Sudetenland allowed Polish companies to undercut the robust Czechoslovak exports to the region and helped Majewski finally persuade Warsaw to create a permanent shipping connection from Gdynia.¹⁵⁰ By May 1939, a couple of companies from Łódź and Białystok had also opened offices in the Union and a new consular agency had been created in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, Fudakowski was pleased to witness the emergence of the Committee of Jewish Citizens and Friends of Poland, which raised funds for the Polish air force in anticipation of a confrontation with Nazi Germany.¹⁵² Still, the Brühl Palace’s preferred “national” nature of colonial expansion interfered with Majewski’s work. By August 1939, supposedly with the owner’s acquiescence, the “Zamorski Eksport-Import” had purchased most of the stocks in “Międzyrzecki” in order to infiltrate the predominantly Jewish partnership with Polish agents.¹⁵³ Majewski decried these “unrealistic personnel concepts,” which stemmed from anti-Semitism, as reckless and called the state to inject more capital into the “Zamorski Eksport-Import” to avert its decline.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁸ “Jan Majewski to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” May 10, 1938, 2/322/9758, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁴⁹ Yiehiel Nahari Międzyrzecki, “Sprawozdanie z Rodezji dla Państwowego Instytutu Eksportowego oraz Izby Przemysłowo-Handlowej w Warszawie,” July 4, 1938, 2/322/9758, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁵⁰ “Jan Majewski to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,” June 9, 1938, 2, 2/322/3324, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁵¹ A.M. Jezierska, “Unia Południowo-Afrykańska. Krótka analiza rynku,” May 1939, 2/322/9739, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁵² “Committee of Jewish Citizens and Friends of Poland,” 1939, 75067, Konsulat (Cape Town, South Africa), HILA.

¹⁵³ “Emigration Division to Jan Majewski,” August 1939, 2/322/9739, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁵⁴ “Telegram from Jan Majewski to Wiktor Drymmer,” August 5, 1939, 2/322/9739, MSZ, AAN.

Notwithstanding the self-made problems undermining the Brühl Palace's trade policies in the final months before the German-Soviet invasion, Majewski's streak of commercial successes in southeastern Africa emboldened the consulate in Cape Town to consider pioneering experimental settlements in the region. Consular agents believed that the growing Polish commercial network would facilitate the sale of raw materials produced in prospective Polish farms and mines. Moreover, as in South America, it was a politically precarious borderland split between Southern Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique) that was targeted for economic infiltration. Stanisław Lisiecki, an employee of the Polish consular post in Johannesburg, deemed the former territory, with its area of 386,000 sq. km and mostly indigenous population of 1,154,000 as suitable for investment and limited settlement, since it offered cheap labor, developed infrastructure, and strategic raw materials such as cotton, tobacco, gold, and coal.¹⁵⁵ Jan Kozielski (Karski), on the other hand, recommended expansion in Mozambique based upon the assumption that Portugal's economic weakness and Britain's desire to curb German immigration would allegedly render limited Polish settlement desirable for everyone.¹⁵⁶ According to him, Mozambique's area was large, 786,000 km², but was only home to a small population of 4,000,000 only, including 25,000 whites, which yielded a population density of 5.2/sq. km. While the climate was tropical and prohibitive of physical labor, Kozielski wrote, the limited sources of Portuguese capital meant that Mozambique's raw materials such as gold, copper, tea, and cotton could not be properly exploited. Moreover, his argument continued, since Mozambique imported textile products and cement, Poland could easily meet its demand for these products.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ "Rodezja Południowa. Synteza ze sprawozdania p.Lisieckiego," July 1938, 2/322/9758, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁵⁶ Jan Kozielski, "Ekspansja polska w Afryce," March 28, 1939, 2/322/9737, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁵⁷ Jan Kozielski, "Załącznik No. 2. Mozambik," March 28, 1939, 2/322/9737, MSZ, AAN.

The main promoter of Polish settlement in Mozambique and Southern Rhodesia was an individual named Emil Surycz, an engineer hailing from the Polish eastern town of Stryj. Born in 1902 to a wealthy local family, Surycz left the town as a young man to study in Belgium and subsequently served in the Polish Army in the years 1919–1920. In 1936, after months of interning as a farmer and traveling across southeastern Africa, the Polish engineer purchased farms called “Belmonte” and “Chicamba Real” near the town of Macequece (Massi Kessi) in the Manica district of Mozambique, at the border with Southern Rhodesia, after which he made contact with Cape Town.¹⁵⁸ (Figure 5) According to Lisiecki, who was commissioned to tour Surycz’s possessions, Macequece and the neighboring district of Manica benefited from a healthy climate, excellent soil, a small white population, inexpensive indigenous labor, relative industrial advancement (textiles), and location along the railway that connected the port of Beira to Salisbury. The Polish consular agent pointed out, moreover, that the border between Southern Rhodesia and Mozambique was allegedly a “fiction” and the town of Umtali (Mutare) in British territory was Macequece’s cultural and economic center. The “Belmonte” farm covered more than 10 sq. km, consisted of 1,600 orange trees, among other minor crops, and was located only six miles away from Umtali and next to a train station. His farm, “Chicamba Real” (20 sq. km), was located fifty-two miles away from Umtali, close to a train station, but its cultivation was still preliminary, apart from small patches of corn, cotton, tobacco, and beans. Lisiecki also reported that Surycz raised cattle in both places and that the local climate was so healthy that one did not need to ingest quinine or install mosquito nets.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ “Jan Majewski to Jan Wagner,” November 16, 1938, 2/322/9751, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁵⁹ Stanisław Lisiecki, “Notatka,” February 2, 1939, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN.



Figure 5. Map of southern Africa showing the approximate location of Quipeio and Macequece. Edited from: Hydrographic Office of the U.S. Navy (Public Domain). Copyright of the edited version: Piotr Puchalski.

In late January 1938, after months of maintaining correspondence with Majewski, Surycz informed the Polish consul in Cape Town about the possibility of purchasing another farm near Macequece from a French count Aubère, which was called “Elands Spring” and covered 44.50 sq. km, for the sum of £2,100.¹⁶⁰ Majewski, trusting in the Polish engineer’s good will, considered this a superb opportunity that would supposedly allow for a number of Polish-Catholic families to settle in the borderland region and contain the local German expansion. In a letter to Drymmer, the consul therefore backed Surycz’s suggestion that Polish entities such as the LMiK could either

¹⁶⁰ “Emil Surycz to Jan Majewski,” January 27, 1938, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN.

purchase the entire farm or half of it in partnership with him.¹⁶¹ The director of the Consular Department immediately reacted to the news and commissioned the MTO to purchase half of “Elands Spring” for an experimental pioneering settlement. In effect, at the end of February, Lisiecki was dispatched to Macequece as an unofficial representative of the MTO to carry out the transaction together with Surycz.¹⁶² In his report from the trip, Lisiecki wrote that “Elands Spring” benefited from a flat landscape, from the proximity of the Munene and Revue Rivers, which served as its natural irrigator, from Aubère’s past cultivation that left the farm free of major weeds, and from well-maintained houses. Moreover, the consular agent conveyed the idea that a certain Portuguese mining official had suggested that neighboring hills might be rich in minerals, including gold.¹⁶³ The acquisition of one half of “Elands Spring” was only temporary, however, since the MTO merely served as an intermediary for a Polish-Jewish buyer Matyas Garfinkel. The personal choice of Garfinkel soon began to face opposition from the Emigration Division as, in an act of anti-Semitic exclusion, Zarychta’s department lobbied Drymmer not to associate what it described as Surycz’s pioneering effort in Mozambique with the Jewish businessman.¹⁶⁴ Drymmer approved the selection of Garfinkel as the buyer of “Elands Spring,” however, and the final transaction took place in July 1938.¹⁶⁵

In mid-August 1938, Majewski informed the Emigration Division about the opportunity to purchase another farm in Mozambique, which would supposedly help turn the area into a Polish economic hub. The farm in question was called “Lacerda” – after its owner, Manuel de Lacerda – and covered an area of 200 sq. km. According to the LMiK’s interns Zbigniew Wiśniowski and

¹⁶¹ “Jan Majewski to Wiktor Drymmer,” February 2, 1938, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁶² “Jan Majewski to Wiktor Drymmer,” March 7, 1938, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁶³ Stanisław Lisiecki, “Raport sprawozdawczy z podróży służbowej do Macequece w sprawie zakupu farmy ‘Elands Spring,’” March 22, 1938, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁶⁴ “Notatka dla Pana D.D.K. w sprawie farmy Eland’s Spring w Mozambiku,” April 30, 1938, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁶⁵ “Jan Majewski to the Emigration Division,” August 3, 1938, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN.

Jan Olszewski, “Lacerda” neighbored Surycz’s “Chicamba” and enjoyed similar agricultural and geological conditions (mostly fertile laterite soil). Surycz pointed out, moreover, that the new farm had been completely surveyed and possessed a border made of concrete, as well as a natural irrigation system flowing out of the Revue River and expensive elements of hygienic infrastructure required for raising cattle. Majewski estimated that, thanks to the Polish engineer’s negotiation skills, the cost of “Lacerda” decreased and buying the farm became a good deal.¹⁶⁶ In turn, Lisiecki wrote that Manuel de Lacerda was a respected and wealthy Portuguese resident of Beira and Sweden’s honorary consul. He was to have approached the Polish consulate about the sale of his farm after serving as a lawyer during the negotiations over “Elands Spring.” He marketed Mozambique as a farming area that was superior to other potential destinations for Polish colonists like Nyasaland and suggested the price of £11,000-12,000, for which an interested Polish institution could receive a collateral in Surycz’s other farms.¹⁶⁷ Majewski suggested that, as long as “Lacerda” was successfully cleared, planting 10 sq. km of corn already in the first year after the purchase could result in as much as a 60% return, but also that more expensive and strategic staples such as cotton, tobacco, and citruses would have to be planted later. The consul predicted that about twenty experienced Polish-Catholic families of farmers could arrive in Mozambique on an individual basis to inaugurate the enterprise.¹⁶⁸

While the question of “Lacerda” remained open and “Elands Spring” was being transferred to its new owners, one of whom was Jewish, in September 1938 Drymmer communicated that Poland treated the region of southeastern Africa as a potential space for both mass emigration, mostly of the Jewish “element,” and for economic exploitation, mostly through “qualified national

¹⁶⁶ “Jan Majewski to the Emigration Division,” August 18, 1938, 2/322/9761, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁶⁷ “Stanisław Lisiecki to the Emigration Division,” August 22, 1938, 2/322/9761, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁶⁸ “Jan Majewski to the Emigration Division,” November 26, 1938, 4–8, 2/322/9761, MSZ, AAN.

Polish element.” He argued that a concentration of plantations and/or mines in Polish hands was desirable, but warned the consulate in Cape Town that any actions should be taken with absolute secrecy and carefulness to dodge Western whistle-blowers.¹⁶⁹ Drymmer’s mention of the possibility of Jewish emigration to Mozambique did not please all the parties involved, however, as it went against the contemporary trend of completely separating Jews from Polish-Catholic projects, for example in Madagascar. At the end of November 1938 Surycz described Garfinkel as supposedly unfit for colonial pioneering, in this case for running a farm, claiming that his new Jewish partner intended to sell “Elands Spring” as soon as possible instead of managing it for a couple of years. Surycz argued that Garfinkel gave off the “worst possible impression” by being willing to sell his half of the property to anyone, including non-Poles.¹⁷⁰ Even Majewski, normally appreciative of Polish-Jewish trade intermediaries such as Międzyrzecki, remarked: “it is unfortunately a bitter experience that one cannot quite depend on the non-Polish element for the hard task of colonial pioneering.”¹⁷¹ It was later revealed that Garfinkel’s justification for abandoning the project was his wish to raise cattle, but the Polish consul still deemed the Jewish businessman’s wish as impractical in this part of Africa.¹⁷² In his turn, in a letter to Lisiecki, Garfinkel accused Surycz of taking most of the farm’s inventory for himself, but the consular agent took the engineer’s side.¹⁷³ In the case of Macequece, the exclusion of Jews from the project was bottom-up and contradicted Drymmer’s hope that, given the successes of Międzyrzecki and his partners, the area – as an exception from the rule – could be used to channel both Polish-Jewish and (more limited) Polish-Catholic emigration out of Poland.

¹⁶⁹ “Wiktor Drymmer to the Consulate in Cape Town,” September 1938, 2/322/9761, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁷⁰ “Emil Surycz to Jan Majewski,” November 29, 1938, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁷¹ “Jan Majewski to Apoloniusz Zarychta,” December 6, 1938, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁷² “Jan Majewski to Apoloniusz Zarychta,” February 2, 1939, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁷³ “Stanisław Lisiecki to Matyas Garfinkel,” January 23, 1939, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN.

The state of ownership of the Polish farms around Macequece was clarified at the beginning of 1939. In reaction to the conflict between Garfinkel and Surycz, the MTO arranged for Garfinkel to sell his half of “Elands Springs” to Wojciech Dyjas, a non-Jewish Pole hailing from Katowice, but in the name of his brother-in-law, a farmer Antoni Rydzewski.¹⁷⁴ In fact, however, a complicated series of financial transactions ensued, whereby Surycz first sold his original half of the farm to Dyjas in order to purchase Garfinkel’s.¹⁷⁵ In addition, Surycz wished to acquire a large citrus orchard of more than 20 sq. km, called “Mossop” and located in the proximity of “Elands Spring.” He therefore asked the MTO to buy his remaining half of the farm in order to allow him the funds necessary for the purchase.¹⁷⁶ This transfer of property to the MTO did not happen, however; by March 1939, Surycz instead reached an agreement to purchase “Lacerda.” In turn, Zarychta proposed to Drymmer that about half of the cost should come from the ministerial budget while the transaction was being carried out indirectly through one of the BGK’s subsidiaries, the “British and Polish Trade Bank.”¹⁷⁷ In the next month, the Emigration Division also drafted a plan whereby a fictional partnership including Surycz and his intern Wiśniowski would purchase “Lacerda” for £13,100, which was funding that would need to be transferred to Majewski before the deadline of May 10. It would be the MTO that would be subsequently tasked with initial works on the farm: parcellation, seeding, and building administrative houses and roads connecting “Lacerda” to the nearby railway.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ “Mieczysław Lepecki and Leon Bączkiewicz to the Consulate in Cape Town,” December 29, 1938, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN; “Wojciech Dyjas to the Emigration Division,” February 9, 1939, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁷⁵ Stanisław Lisiecki, “Raport sprawozdawczy z podróży po Mozambiku - w sprawie nabycia połowy farmy Elands Spring - odbytej z polecenia Konsulatu R.P. w Capetown /19.XII.38 - 5 bm./,” January 6, 1939, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁷⁶ “Notatka w sprawie zezwolenia Komisji Dewizowej na przekazanie do Afryki 1.500 funtów ang. w związku z nabyciem farmy ‘Elands Spring,’” December 14, 1938, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁷⁷ Apoloniusz Zarychta, “Notatka dla Pana DDK w sprawie nabycia terenów ‘L’ w Port. Afryce Wsch. pod osadnictwo,” March 8, 1939, 2/322/9761, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁷⁸ “Projekt planu akcji kolonizacyjno-plantacyjnej na terenach ‘Lacerda’ w Portugalskiej Afryce Wschodniej,” April 1939, 2/322/9761, MSZ, AAN.

Lastly, in addition to his farm deals, Surycz also started a mining enterprise. At the end of November 1938, Majewski explained that, allegedly, an unbridled Polish settlement around Macequece was possible partly thanks to the “Mozambique Company,” the major concession-holder in the area, which welcomed the inflow of mining specialists in order to increase the exploitation of gold and other minerals like tin, copper and asbestos to compete with Rhodesian imports.¹⁷⁹ By the time, Surycz already managed to acquire the right to purchase a local copper mine called “Edmundian,” which had been abandoned by the Germans during World War I, and started to court Polish investors to join him in the enterprise.¹⁸⁰ In effect, the state subsidiary “TISSA” considered a plan whereby the copper obtained from the “Edmundian” would be delivered to Rhodesian factories in exchange for copper concentrates from mines that were geographically closer to Poland.¹⁸¹ In March 1939, Surycz and Dyjas agreed to exploit the mine together and in partnership with Rydzewski. The “TISSA,” however, ultimately abandoned the scheme, which resulted in Rydzewski not being allowed by the government to leave Poland with the capital necessary to start the works.¹⁸² In fact, one of the members of a contemporary scientific expedition that Warsaw dispatched to southeastern Africa in cooperation with the Jagiellonian University, a geologist Marian Książkiewicz, examined the “Edmundian” and determined that its copper had been largely exhausted.¹⁸³ In late June 1939, Dyjas complained about his financial situation resulting from the unexplained departure of the Polish state subsidiary and asked for

¹⁷⁹ “Jan Majewski to the Emigration Division,” November 26, 1938, 1–2.

¹⁸⁰ “Życiorys,” August 12, 1938, 2/322/9751, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁸¹ “Notatka w sprawie zezwolenia Komisji Dewizowej na przekazanie do Afryki 1.500 funtów ang. w związku z nabyciem farmy ‘Elands Spring.’”

¹⁸² “Wiktor Drymmer to Seweryn Sokołowski,” May 22, 1939, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁸³ Zieliński, “Sprawozdanie z konferencji u Pana DDK, odbytej w Zakopanem dn. 29 grudnia 1938 r.,” 2–3; Bolesław Olszewicz and Marian Książkiewicz, “Z podróży po Mozambiku,” in *Ze wspomnień podróżników* (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1958), 94–126; “Wincenty Czarnowski to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in London,” October 25, 1940, 59003/120.12, MSZ, HILA.

permission to use the funds already deposited for the project (£2,500) in a local bank.¹⁸⁴ Only Surycz enjoyed access to these funds, however.

Table 4. The Polish Farms around Macequece, Mozambique as of September 1939

Name	Owner(s)	Status	Area (sq. km)	Price
“Belmonte”	Emil Surycz	Purchased	10	N/A
“Chicamba Real”	Emil Surycz	Purchased	20	N/A
“Elands Spring”	Emil Surycz / Wojciech Dyjas	Purchased	44.5	£2,100
“Lacerda”	Emil Surycz / Zbigniew Wiśniowski	Undetermined	200	£13,100
“Edmundian”	Emil Surycz / Wojciech Dyjas	Purchased	N/A	N/A

Despite his conflict with Garfinkel and the questionable profitability of the “Edmundian,” the Brühl Palace remained rather confident about Surycz since, until September 1939, multiple agents vouched for his good will. In November 1938, Majewski even lobbied the government to decorate the engineer with a Gold Cross of Merit. The consul explained to Zarychta that Surycz had not only shown remarkable pioneering skills but had also acquired the reputation of a “good Pole and farmer capable of living with the natives and directing them appropriately and in a humanitarian fashion.” Most importantly, however, Surycz supposedly wished to turn Macequece into a Mecca for Polish-Catholic settlers by hiring interns from the LMiK and making personal sacrifices to help his countrymen in Africa.¹⁸⁵ In response to Majewski’s request, and in order to ensure that Surycz was not a shady character, Zarychta attempted to determine why the Polish engineer had come to Africa and purchased land in Mozambique.¹⁸⁶ He learned from the consul that Surycz had left his job at the Polish State Railways (PKP) in Toruń because of disagreements with his superiors, who were supposedly ill-disposed toward him for ostentatiously giving away his salary to charities.¹⁸⁷ According to an official from Bydgoszcz, however, Surycz had left the

¹⁸⁴ “Notatka dla P.D.D.K. w sprawie Dr. Dyjasa,” June 1939, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁸⁵ “Jan Majewski to the Emigration Division,” January 17, 1939, 2/322/9751, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁸⁶ “Apoloniusz Zarychta to Jan Majewski,” October 12, 1938, 2/322/9751, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁸⁷ “Polish State Railways to the Emigration Division,” September 24, 1938, 2/322/9751, MSZ, AAN; “Jan Majewski to Jan Wagner,” November 16, 1938.

company after being asked to show proof of his citizenship.¹⁸⁸ According to another source, Surycz had suffered an accident while working for the state railways, resulting in the loss of his right eye and a large compensation sum that helped him purchase one of his farms in Macequece.¹⁸⁹ The Brühl Palace also commissioned Maria Zakrzewska, freshly returned from Madagascar, to carry out more colonial reconnaissance, this time in southeastern Africa. In a report from December 1938, Zakrzewska deemed the Polish farms around Macequece as promising.¹⁹⁰ In effect, the reputation of Surycz and his plantations would only suffer a blow after the joint German-Soviet invasion of September 1939 destroyed the Polish state and encouraged the Polish government-in-exile to consider Mozambique as an emigration outlet for refugees.

Conclusion

In the late 1930s, the Brühl Palace adopted a “realistic” approach to colonial expansion that, in contrast to the LMiK’s “reckless colonial actions,” was supposed to take place in the shadows of Beck’s diplomatic agenda. This “realistic” approach signaled a return to treating the Colonial Question as an ideological construct concerned with economics and pertaining to Polish Catholics. In the first place, Warsaw was interested in supplementing the existing Polish-Catholic settlements in the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland in order to turn them into economic hubs that would work for the Polish state. In the second place, the Brühl Palace wished to increase Poland’s commercial exchange with the colonies in order to buy strategic raw materials at lower prices. In turn, the foreign ministry brokered the creation of a state-sponsored colonial conglomerate of companies and partnerships, including the “Zamorski Eksport-Import” and “Międzyrzecki.” Moreover, Warsaw used false-flag real estate acquisitions to create informal

¹⁸⁸ “Jan Majewski to Jan Wagner,” November 16, 1938.

¹⁸⁹ “Jan Majewski to Jan Wagner,” February 4, 1939, 2/322/9751, MSZ, AAN.

¹⁹⁰ “Apoloniusz Zarychta to Jan Majewski,” December 29, 1938, 2/322/9760, MSZ, AAN.

spheres of economic influence, especially in politically precarious borderland regions: the Iguaçu area in the Brazilian-Argentinian- Paraguayan borderland and the Macequece area along Mozambique's border with Southern Rhodesia. These Polish colonial projects enjoyed significant success, but the continued preoccupation of the colonial milieu with other "questions," and the Jewish Question in particular, complicated their execution.

Conclusion

Beyond Empire

The Polish colonial projects discussed in this dissertation involved members of what I have termed the colonial milieu generating “answers” to a set of contemporary “questions.” These questions addressed the relationship between a modern nation-state and emigration, the role of maritime commerce in its industrial development, the ethnoreligious and socioeconomic composition of its population, and the perception of Poland’s place in imagined hierarchies of civilization. They emerged at a precarious time when the world order was in flux. The age of empires and traditional colonialism based upon direct political rule was waning, but had by no means completely disappeared, during the interwar period and was being replaced with an international system featuring more fluid forms of governance. In turn, the nature of what was constructed as Poland’s Colonial Question changed in relation to domestic and external symptoms of the mutating world order, demonstrating how the colonial milieu adapted to new circumstances. More broadly speaking, the story of this adaptability demonstrates the ways in which a weaker nation could respond to the changing world.

In the 1920s Polish elites promoted the idea that, if their emigration was channeled to “pre-modern” South America, Polish-Catholic peasants would escape assimilation and become colonists, or the Polish state’s political and commercial agents. In this manner, the redirection of emigration became a potential answer to the problem of Polish emigrants assimilating into the surrounding population. Geopolitical factors at the turn of the decade, particularly the right-wing tilt of the Brazilian government, shifted the focus of the Polish colonial milieu from South America to Africa, where its members now imagined professional farmers and merchants pioneering

plantations and trading posts. Commercial expansion in Africa became viewed as an answer to the desire to enter “modernity,” as it was imagined as upgrading Poland from its status of post-imperial periphery to that of colonial core. By the early 1930s the Polish government supported the LMiK in this colonial pioneering, believing that it was a road to maritime modernity, which was a manifestation of a broader obsession among eastern European elites.

The disappointment of the first “colonial action” in Portuguese Angola, during which individual emigrants failed to become the Polish state’s agents, reinforced the shift away from managing emigration toward commercial expansion. Angola was not only a site of economic pioneering but also a laboratory in which the possibility of Poland’s “civilizing mission” was addressed. At the same time, the Polish subscription to Portuguese colonialism and racism for economic reasons was also largely a function of the geopolitical game between the Western powers and Germany. Once Portuguese leaders began to view the German threat as too acute, they limited all European immigration into their colonies, encouraging Poland’s colonial milieu to replace settlement with trade as the leading item on their agenda. However, as they worked to open French colonies to free trade with Poland, colonial pundits received overtures from Liberian and Ethiopian leaders who wished to use its services to combat Western internationalist colonialism. The Promethean approach to colonial expansion did not produce satisfactory results for the Poles either, since the act of squaring Poland’s economic and geopolitical interests with the expectation of liberating nations and tribes in Africa became an impossible one. At the end of the day, colonial ideology was put in the service of practicality, but the negotiation that took place between state, semi-state, and non-state actors suggests the limits of interpreting interwar Poland as a centralized power.

Promethean colonialism quickly made room for another, more systemic construction of the Colonial Question. During the Ethiopian crisis of 1934–1936, Poland’s foreign minister Józef Beck decided to take advantage of the fact that Italy reinjected the Colonial Question into the international forum in order to negotiate its nature. He commissioned Wiktor Drymmer to write the “Colonial Theses,” which identified the acquisition of colonial raw materials and emigration outlets as an answer to what the government viewed as Poland’s demographic-economic problem. This problem, however, Polish officials connected to the purported “Jewish Question,” whose “solution” Polish elites viewed increasingly in promoting Jewish emigration from Poland. In the years 1937–1938, a combination of colonial, anti-Semitic, and ostensibly pro-Zionist ideas resulted in the conflation of Poland’s Colonial and Jewish Questions. Colonial schemes that selectively incorporated Jews, in particular the Madagascar project, did not stem only from racial or religious anti-Semitism of the extreme Right but also from a more technocratic strand of anti-Semitism that, in particular circumstances and in self-serving conditions set by Polish state agents, allowed some Jews to play some sort of a role as Poland’s commercial agents. The colonial milieu did not choose colonial territories only as dumping grounds for Jews but sometimes took what they perceived as the commercial potential of Jews into account during the planning stage. Polish Catholic elites, however, increasingly separated Polish “colonies” from Jewish “emigration outlets,” which were imagined as “supplementary” to Palestine.

Initially, the search for economic concessions in the colonies, where Polish-Catholic pioneering would take place, and for emigration outlets, mostly for Jews, took the form of multilateral negotiations in the League of Nations. However, what essentially became Beck’s calls to negotiate the nature of the international system fell on deaf ears, as the Western powers wished to associate them with Axis revisionism in order to protect their interests. In turn, Poland’s colonial

agenda became a function of foreign policy and was used to fight the Western willingness to appease Nazi Germany in Africa and eastern Europe on the eve of World War II. At the same time, in order to fulfill its colonial agenda on its own terms, the Polish government took full control of the LMiK and created state-sponsored colonial conglomerates to promote limited emigration to the Brazilian-Argentinian-Paraguayan borderland as well as economic expansion in Portuguese Mozambique. As the Brühl Palace carried out what it saw as “realistic” expansion, the Colonial Question became a synonym for the question of commercial expansion and raw materials. It ceased to concern Jews as a group, although several individual Jewish merchants continued to play a major role in Polish trade.

During the interwar period, Polish colonial projects generally became more “modern,” as they became less concerned with acquiring political colonies in the traditional sense and more concerned with the expansion of capital through the purchase of plantations, mines, and other economic concessions, as well as stocks in foreign corporations and government loans. Likewise, Polish negotiations for non-traditional forms of governance such as condominium constituted a “modern” phenomenon. The dream of power as it was manifested in the possession of colonies in the strict sense did, of course, rally nationalists around the flag more than any other form of colonial expansion. But if colonial projects dragged Poland into modernity, they did so by forcing Polish leaders to consider original forms of international cooperation (and European domination).

The Polish state occupied a role in the world order that, in its combination of traditional colonialism and Wilsonian internationalism, inadvertently placed the weak states of eastern Europe, including Poland, beyond the most important networks of power. In fact, the states of eastern Europe, despite their geopolitical significance as a buffer zone between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, remained only partly integrated into the group of powers dominating world

order. In response, interwar Polish leaders imagined their state as situated beyond empire, painting Poland's colonial expansion as a manner in which inequalities between European powers could be addressed, as its escape from what they constructed as socioeconomic problems, and as something different from Western "imperialism." While doing so, they also constructed what it meant to be "Polish," which – despite unexpected moments of inclusion, during which Ukrainians and Jews were temporarily invited to participate in carefully selected colonial projects – was ultimately defined in a narrower sense as being a Polish-speaking Catholic or an ethnic Pole.

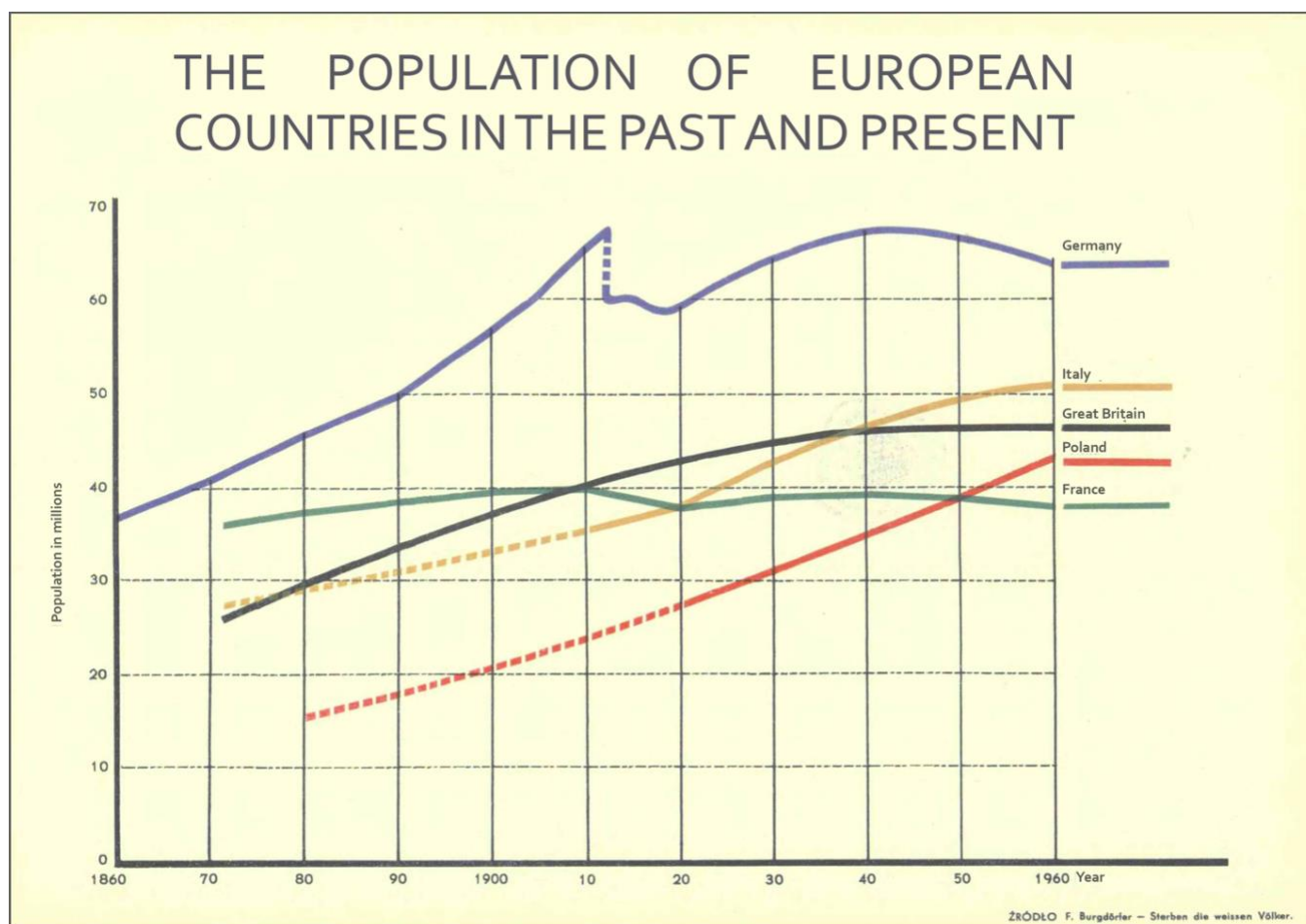
It has not been my intention to argue that Poland was unique in its interactions with empire or to subscribe to Timothy Snyder's dichotomy of "decolonial" Poland interested in promoting independence movements around the globe and "recolonial" Nazi Germany desiring a return of imperialism, this time with a clear genocidal bent.¹ The point is not whether the Poles transcended empire, as Snyder has implied, but that they adopted both traditional nationalist and internationalist Wilsonian approaches in order to reconcile the contradictions of the interwar system.

¹ Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (London: Vintage, 2016), 31–32.

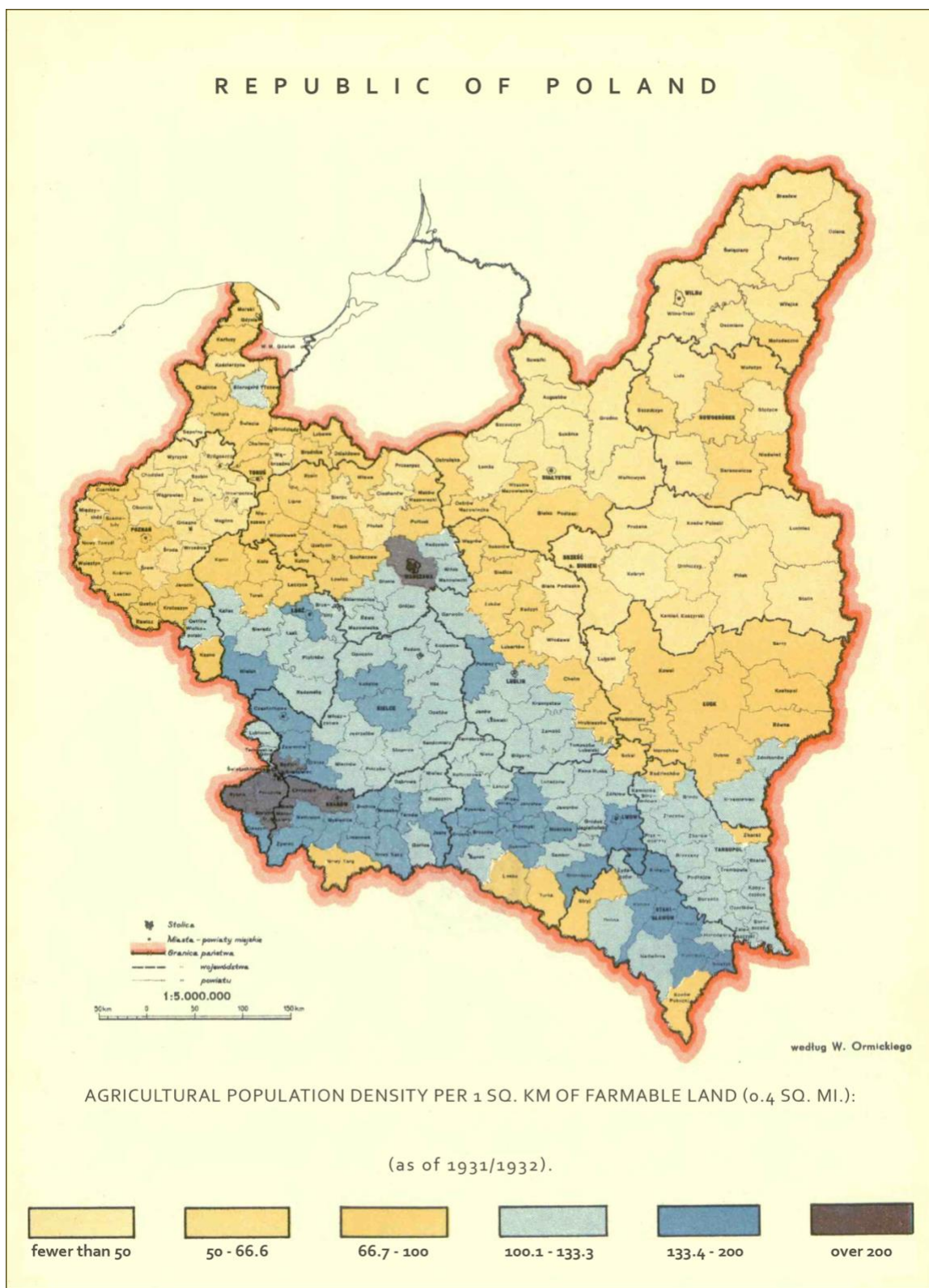
Appendices

These figures represent Poland's "Colonial Theses" drafted at the Brühl Palace in the second half of 1936. They are translations of original figures published in *Problem emigracyjny i surowcowy w Polsce* (Warsaw: Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, 1937), a work in the public domain. In order, the figures illustrate what interwar Poland's leaders identified as the country's overpopulation (1–2); its need for colonial raw materials (3); its need for emigration outlets, especially for Jews (4); the contribution of Polish-Jewish emigration to Palestine (5); and the paradoxical distribution of large colonies among small European powers (6). Note that in the years 1934–1939, the average exchange rate of the Polish zloty to the United States dollar was 5.3/1.

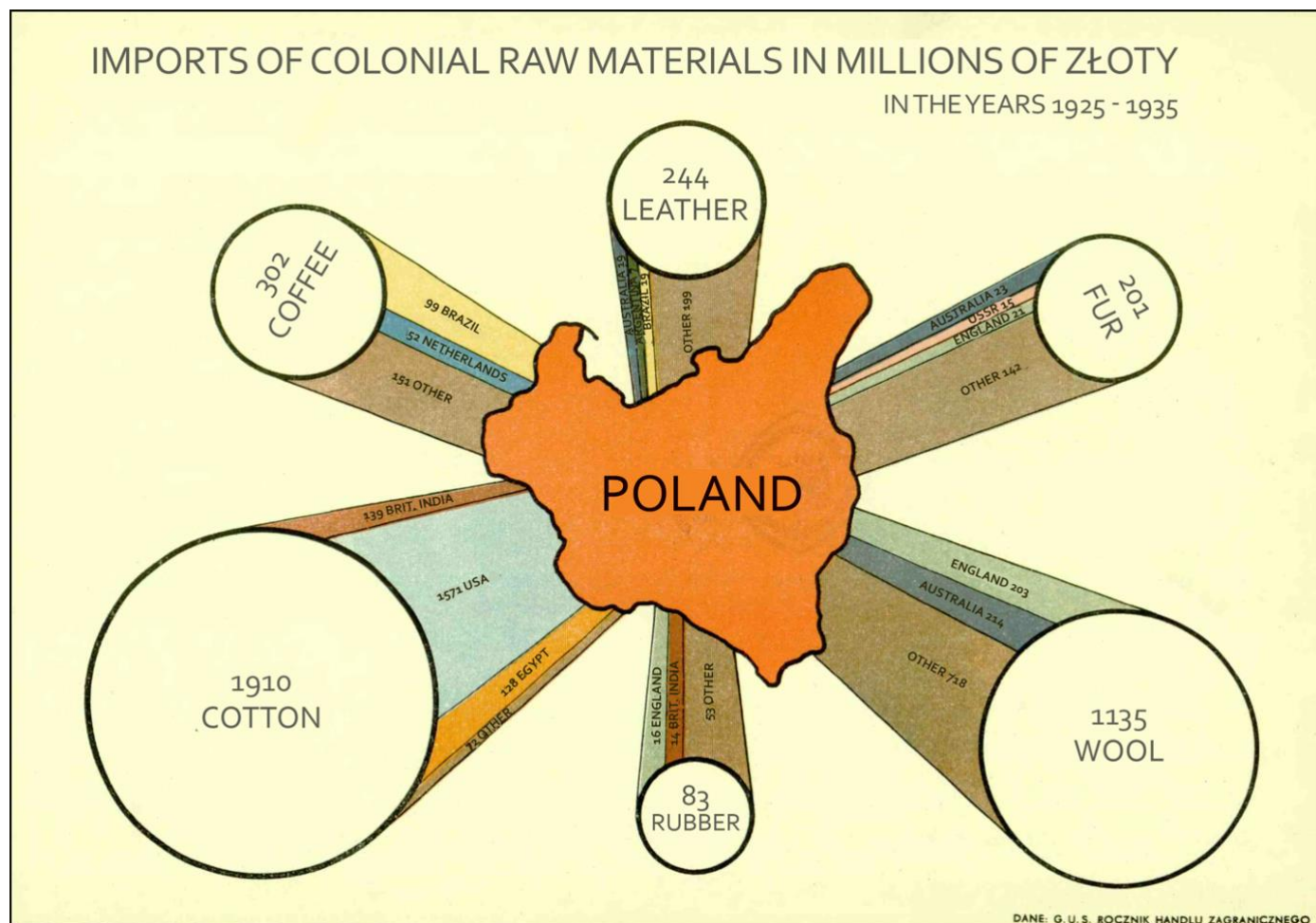
Appendix 1



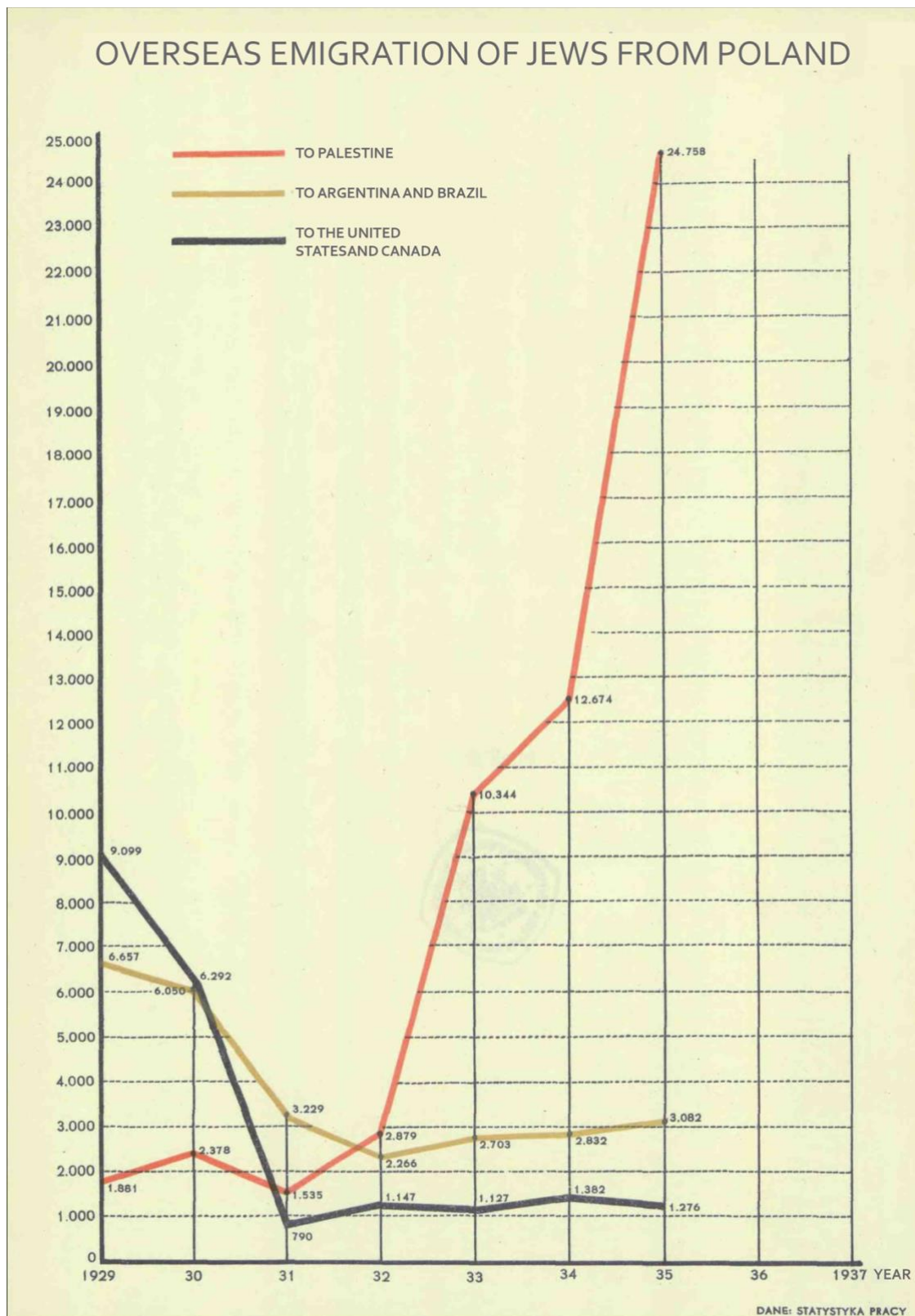
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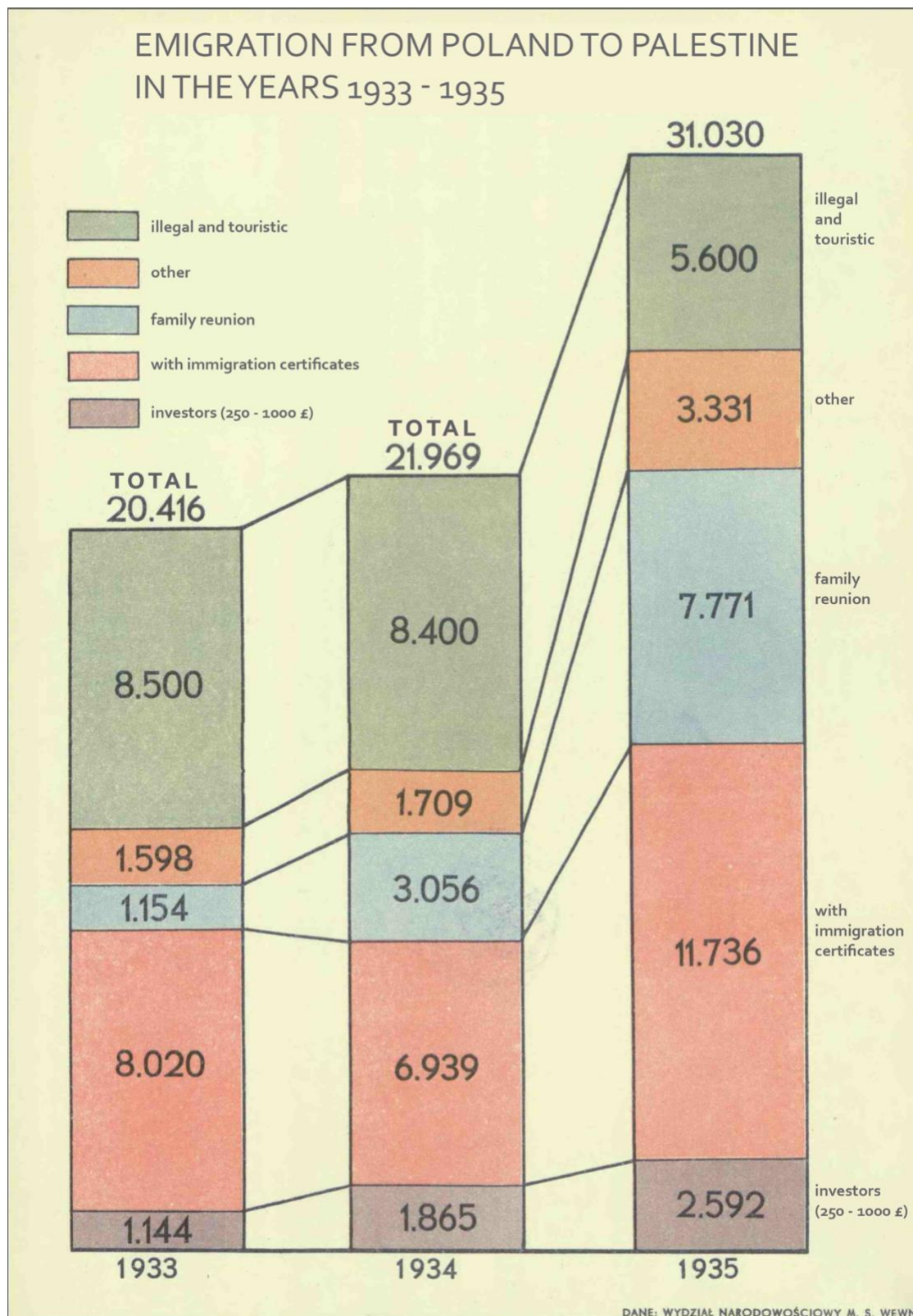
Appendix 3



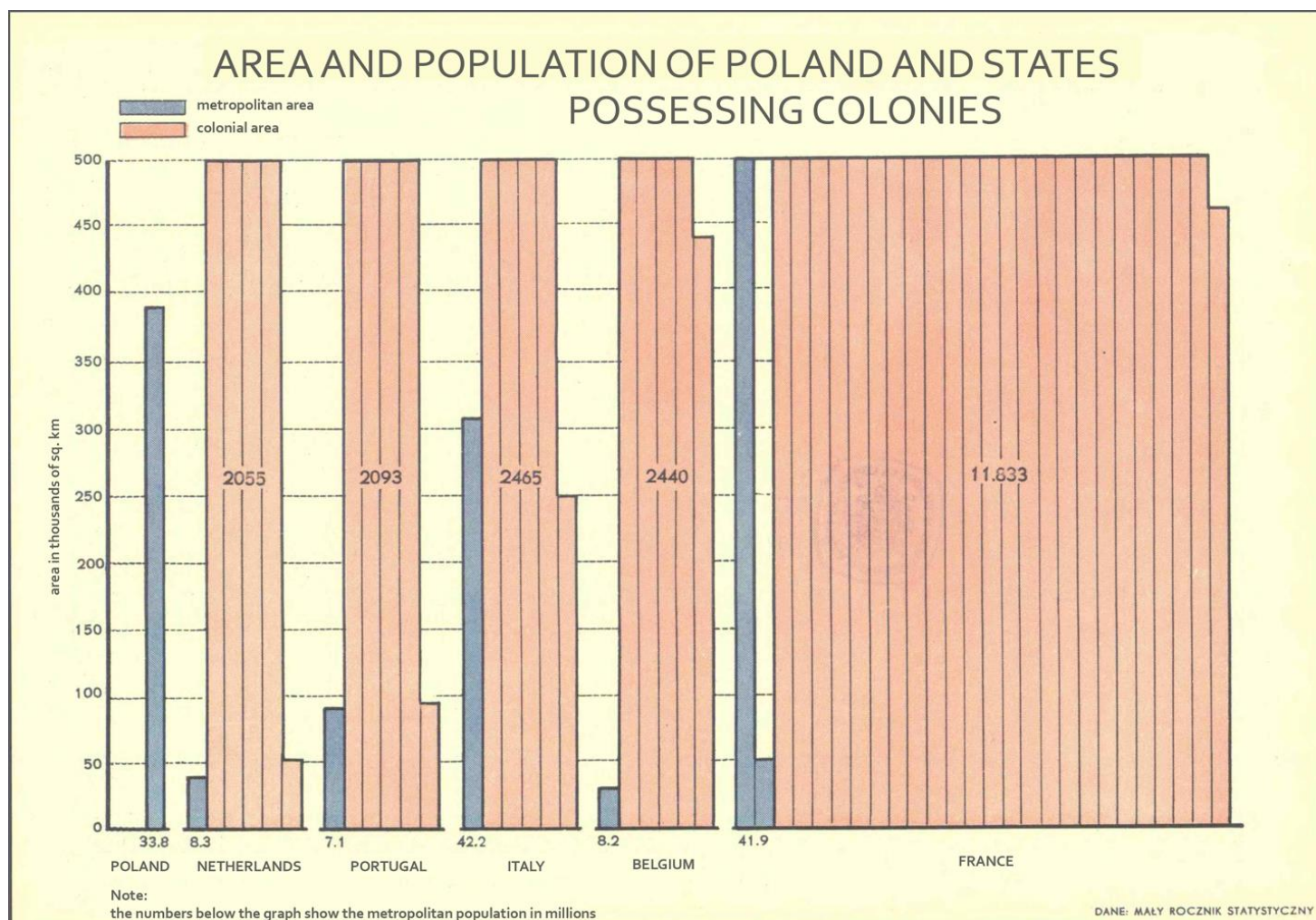
Appendix 4



Appendix 5



Appendix 6



Bibliography

Archives

France

Archives diplomatiques de Nantes [ADN] (Diplomatic Archives in Nantes)

- Londres, Série C (London, Series C)

Archives diplomatiques de Paris [ADP] (Diplomatic Archives in Paris)

- Correspondance politique et commerciale, Série Z-Europe, Pologne (Political and Commercial Correspondence, Z-Europe Series, Poland)
- Correspondance politique et commerciale, Série K-Afrique (Political and Commercial Correspondence, Series K-Africa)
- Papiers d'agents (Agents Papers) (Léon Noël)
- Service français de la Société des Nations (French Service of the League of Nations)

Archives Nationales d'Outre-mer à Aix-en-Provence [ANOM]

(National Archives of Overseas in Aix-en-Provence)

- Archives privées, Comité central français pour l'Outre-Mer (Private Archives, French Central Committee for Overseas)
- Madagascar, Série B, Correspondance générale et registres divers (Madagascar, Series B, General Correspondence and Miscellaneous Registers)
- Ministère des Colonies, Agence économique de la France d'outre-mer (Ministry of Colonies, Economic Agency for Overseas)
- Ministère des Colonies, Direction des Affaires économiques et du Plan (Ministry of Colonies, Department of Economic Affairs and Planning)
- Ministère des Colonies, Direction des Affaires politiques (Ministry of Colonies, Department of Political Affairs)

Germany

Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde [BAL] (Federal Archive in Berlin-Lichterfelde)

- Publikationsstelle Berlin-Dahlem (Publication Office in Berlin-Dahlem)

Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes in Berlin [PAAA]

(Political Archive of the Foreign Ministry in Berlin)

- RAV Warschau (Warsaw Embassy Files)
- RAV Paris (Paris Embassy Files)
- RAV Posen (Poznań Consulate Files)
- RZ 209 Referat Völkerbund – Liberia (League of Nations – Liberia Section)
- RZ 211 Politische Abteilung 1936-1945, Referat Pol. I Völkerbund (Political Department 1936-1945, Pol. I League of Nations Section)

Poland

Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie [AAN]

(Central Archive of Modern Records in Warsaw)

- Akta Kazimierza i Janiny Warchałowskich (Kazimierz and Janina Warchałowski Files)
- Akta Michała Gieysztora (Michał Gieysztor Files)
- Ambasada RP w Berlinie (Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Berlin)
- Ambasada RP w Londynie (Embassy of the Republic of Poland in London)
- Ambasada RP w Paryżu (Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Paris)
- Archiwum Rodziny Niedenthali (Niedenthal Family Files)
- Biuro Prac Kongresowych (Bureau of Congress Works)
- Delegacja Polska na Konferencję Pokojową w Paryżu (Polish Delegation to the Peace Conference in Paris)
- Delegacja RP przy Lidze Narodów w Genewie (Delegation of the Republic of Poland to the League of Nations in Geneva)
- Konsulat Generalny RP w Londynie (Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in London)
- Konsulat Generalny RP w Nowym Jorku (Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in New York)
- Konsulat Honorowy RP w Monrowii (Honorary Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Monrovia)
- Konsulat RP w Marsylii (Consulate of the Republic of Poland in Marseille)
- Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych w Warszawie (Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw) [MSZ]
- Poselstwo RP w Buenos Aires (Legation of the Republic of Poland in Buenos Aires)
- Prezydium Rady Ministrów w Warszawie (Presidium of the Council of Ministers in Warsaw)
- Towarzystwo Kolonizacyjne w Warszawie (Colonization Society in Warsaw)
- Urząd Wojewódzki w Łucku (Łuck Provincial Governor's Office)
- Urząd Wojewódzki w Stanisławowie (Stanisławów Provincial Governor's Office)
- Urząd Wojewódzki w Wilnie (Wilno Provincial Governor's Office)

Archiwum Muzeum Zamoyskich w Kozłówce [AMZK]

(Zamoyski Museum Archive in Kozłówka)

- Units without series

Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku [APG] (State Archive in Gdańsk)

- Komisarz Generalny RP w Gdańsku (General Commissioner of the Republic of Poland in Gdańsk)
- Żegluga Polska S.A. (Żegluga Polska Joint-Stock Company)

Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku, Oddział w Gdyni [APG (Gdynia)]

(State Archive in Gdańsk, Department in Gdynia)

- Gdynia-Ameryka Linie Żeglugowe S.A. w Gdyni (Gdynia-America Shipping Lines Joint-Stock Company in Gdynia)

- Komisariat Rządu w Gdyni (Government Commissariat in Gdynia)
- Urząd Morski w Gdyni (Maritime Office in Gdynia)

Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie [APL] (State Archive in Lublin)

- Urząd Wojewódzki Lubelski (Lublin Provincial Governor's Office)
- Archiwum Ordynacji Zamoyskich w Kozłówce (Archive of the Zamoyski Estate in Kozłówka)

Biblioteka Narodowa w Warszawie (National Library in Warsaw)

- Microfilm collection

Biblioteka Sejmowa w Warszawie (Sejm Library in Warsaw)

- Transcripts from Sejm sessions

Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe Wojskowego Biura Historycznego w Warszawie [CAW WBH] (Central Military Archive of the Military Historical Office in Warsaw)

- Departament Spraw Morskich i Kierownictwo Marynarki Wojennej (Department of Maritime Affairs and Naval Management)
- Generalny Inspektorat Sił Zbrojnych (General Inspectorate of the Armed Forces)
- Kolekcja Akt Personalnych (Personal Files Collection)
- Kolekcja Generałów i Osobistości (Generals and Personalities Collection)
- Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego (Second Department of the General Staff)
- Organizacje Paramilitarne (Paramilitary Organizations)
- Wojskowe Biuro Historyczne (Military Historical Office)

Filmoteka Narodowa – Instytut Audiowizualny w Warszawie [FNIA] (National Film Archive – Audiovisual Institute in Warsaw)

- Online documentary collection

Narodowa Biblioteka Cyfrowa Polona (National Digital Library Polona)

Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe w Warszawie (National Digital Archive in Warsaw)

- Koncern Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny (Illustrated Daily Courier Concern)
- Zbiór nagrań dźwiękowych (Collection of audio records)

Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich we Wrocławiu (National Ossoliński Institute in Wrocław)

- Manuscript collection

United Kingdom

The National Archives in London [TNA U.K.]

- Foreign Office, Confidential Print Poland
- Foreign Office, Consulate and Legation, Liberia General Correspondence
- Foreign Office, Political Departments General Correspondence
- War Cabinet and Cabinet, Memoranda (GT, CP and G War Series)

The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London [PISM]

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MSZ]
- Polish Legation in Cairo
- Polish National Council in Exile
- The Project of Polish Settlement in New Guinea
- Fudakowski Family Files

United States

Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library [FDRPL]

- Myron C. Taylor Papers
- The President's Secretary's File

Hoover Institution Library and Archives [HILA]

- Register of the Poland, Ambasada (Great Britain) Records
- Register of the Poland, Ambasada (United States) Records
- Register of the Poland, Delegacja przy Lidze Narodów Telegrams
- Register of the Poland, Konsulat Generalny (New York) Records
- Register of the Poland, Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych Records [MSZ]
- Register of the Poland, Poselstwo (Portugal) Records
- Register of the Poland, Ambasada (France) Records
- Register of the Poland, Konsulat (Cape Town, South Africa) Miscellaneous Records
- Register of the Poland, Konsulat Generalny (Pretoria, South Africa) Records
- Tadeusz Romer Papers
- Władysław Wszebór Kulski Papers

Józef Piłsudski Institute of America in New York [JPIA]

- Ambassador Józef Lipski Papers
- Independent Intelligence Unit ESTEZET
- Polish Legation in Rio de Janeiro

Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America in New York [PIASA]

- Polish Legation in Rio de Janeiro

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- Department of State Central Files (RG 59), Central Decimal Files, 1910–1963

University of Wisconsin-Madison, Memorial Library, Microforms and Media Center [UWM]

- Microfilm Collection

Newspapers and Journals

ABC – Nowiny Codzienne

Construire

Czas

Diário de Lisboa

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Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny [IKC]

International Affairs

Jüdische Rundschau

Kwartalnik Naukowego Instytutu do Badań Emigracji i Kolonizacji

Kwartalnik Naukowego Instytutu Emigracyjnego

Kwartalnik Naukowego Instytutu Emigracyjnego i Kolonialnego

L'Effort

La Revue du monde noir

La Voix du Peuple

Le Journal de Madagascar

Le Pays-Réal

Le Petit Parisien

Le Petit Tananarivien

Le Proletariat Malgache

Madera Tribune

Misje Katolickie

Morze

Morze i Kolonie

Nasz Przegląd

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