

# **Activity of the International Refugee Organization in the post-war Europe : The case of the caring action towards Polish displaced persons and refugees, 1947–1951**

## **Description (UMO-2015/19/D/HS3/02361)**

### 1. Research project objectives/ Research hypothesis

The aim of the project is to develop the issue of the International Refugee Organization (IRO) in Europe in the period of its activity, ie. in the years 1947–1951, on the example of Polish *displaced persons* and refugees. Polish citizens were the largest among all national groups eligible to the protection of the Organization. A new research approach – focusing on the multidimensional assistance provided to different categories of Polish displaced persons and refugees in the post-war Europe, and on its results – will be different from the perspective prevailing in the existing monographs on IRO, in which the main subject of analysis is the internal structure of the Organization and the evolution of its objectives, while the topic of Poles benefiting from the IRO's assistance is just mentioned. Moreover, the aim of the project is a comparative analysis of the IRO's activity, on the example of its caring action towards Polish displaced persons and refugees, in the context of earlier attempts to resolve the problem of refugees and displaced persons in Europe at the international level (the League of Nations, the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees, and above all the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) and the analysis of the impact of the IRO's activity on the solutions adopted to help refugees in Europe after the liquidation of the Organization (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the local solutions, for example French office for refugees – OFPRA).

### 2. Research project methodology

The applied research method will provide a critical analysis of the historical sources, mainly of the archival materials and press releases. The most important archival group, which will be subjected to the detailed research is constituted by the IRO archives, stored in the French National Archives in Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, near Paris. Furthermore, the analysis and interpretation will be provided to the source materials produced by the administrations of the particular countries of residence of the Polish displaced persons and refugees covered by the IRO's assistance. Finally, the materials from the Polish archives will be examined, both stored in Poland and abroad. The author also intends to collect oral reports of still living former wards of IRO. The collected data will be subjected to the statistic and demographic analysis in some aspects.

### 3. Expected impact of the research project on the development of science, civilization and society

The expected results will constitute a significant contribution to the new knowledge about the history of refugees and displaced persons in the post-war Europe, as well as about the history of actions taken by the international community to solve the refugee problem. At the same time, the research results will largely broaden the knowledge about the history of Poles living abroad during this period. The issue of the IRO's activity is extremely important from the point of view of understanding the history of Poles living abroad after the Second World War and this issue has been raised in the historiography only incidentally in the articles relating to the post-war history of the Polish displaced persons and refugees in selected countries (including the article of the author of this project published

in the revue "Dzieje Najnowsze" 2014, no. 2, about the attitude of France towards the Polish displaced persons and refugees in this country), and the question of the IRO's activities never constituted the main topic of these texts.

The main result of the project will be the publication of the monograph on the activities of the International Refugee Organization in Europe between 1947–1951, on the example of its caring action towards Polish displaced persons and refugees. The monograph will include a comprehensive approach to the problem, according to the outlined research objectives. Moreover, the author will prepare a post-conference publication containing the materials of the workshop / conference with the participation of recognized researchers from Poland and from abroad, on the protection over the refugees and displaced persons in Europe in the first years after the Second World War. In this publication the contribution of the author of this project will be also included. Finally, during the realization of the project, the author will publish at least two articles in peer-reviewed journals, presenting selected aspects of the research results within the project.

### **Director of project**

Director of project & Principal Investigator: dr Paweł Sękowski, Institute of History UJ