

ANNUAL OPERATIONS REPORT
POLISH HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION
January - December 1996

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A. Humanitarian Aid Convoys

1. Date of departure: February 15, 1996
Bosnia
No. of trucks: 3
Tons: 44
Value: 465,732.76 PLN (173,134.86 USD)

This was Polish Humanitarian Action's fifteenth convoy to the former Yugoslavia. It drove medicine, medical equipment, baby food, and powdered milk to the Bosnian cities of Tuzla and Sarajevo. The gifts were presented to the Children's Clinic and Hospital in Kosovo (Sarajevo) and the Municipal Logistics Center (Tuzla). Janina Ochojska met with the mayors of both cities.

2. Date of departure: April 29, 1996
Bosnia
No. of trucks: 4
Tons: 38
Value: 225,311.54 PLN (83,758.94 USD)

On April 29, 1996 another humanitarian aid convoy left for Tuzla and Sarajevo in Bosnia and the city of Šid in the new Yugoslavia. The convoy carried food, medicine, and bandages that were unloaded in, among others, warehouses managed by the Municipal Logistics Center in Tuzla, as well as school furnishings, including tables, chairs, and blackboards, and 300 Peace Packages prepared by Polish schoolchildren for the "Vrhbosna" school in Sarajevo, destroyed during the war (the children study in makeshift facilities), which we have been taking care of for the past two years.

3. Date of departure: August 9, 1996
Bosnia – Teslić, Sarajevo
No. of trucks: 1
Tons: 16
Value: 96,346.74 PLN (35,816.63 USD)

The convoy delivered clothes, food, hygiene products and medicine to Teslić which was distributed among schools and Muslim (Tesanj), Serb (Teslić) and Croat (Žepce) hospitals by the Polish IFOR battalion stationed there. We delivered school supplies and furnishings, along with Peace Packages prepared by Polish schoolchildren, to children at the Vrhbosna school.

4. Date of departure: August 31, 1996
Kazakhstan
No. of trucks: 2
Tons: 41
Value: 318,209.65 PLN (118,293.55 USD)

Each year the Polish Humanitarian Action Foundation organizes a convoy to Kazakhstan. This year the convoy carried medicine and medical equipment worth 117,700.96 PLN (43,755.00 USD) and food worth 67,059.04 PLN (24,929.01 USD) for the District Children's Hospital in

Kokczetaw, the District Children's Hospital in Akmole, the Karaganda Children's Clinic, and two children's shelters in Karaganda.

We also reached 19 Polish schools in cities and villages in the districts of Kokczetaw, Akmol, and Karaganda. We brought a computer, two TV sets, a tuner with tape deck, school furnishings, and a lot of office and school supplies worth 51,859.03 PLN (19,278.45 USD), along with textbooks from the Ministry of National Education. The teachers, along with the Polish Association in Kazakhstan, distributed other gifts to the Polish community in its area. We provided residents with new clothes and footwear valued at 62,294.79 PLN (23,157.91 USD) and hygiene products worth 19,254.37 PLN (7,157.76 USD).

5. Date of departure: December 17, 1996
 Kazakhstan
 Air freight
 Tons: 11
 Value: 175,819.32 PLN (65,360.34 USD)

The plane that flew to pickup the annual Polish Pilgrimage from Kazakhstan took 2130 Christmas packages to Kazakhstan for Polish families and a TV set for a Polish school in Karaganda.

Convoys in 1996

Date	Place	No. of trucks	Tons	Value PLN (USD)
02/14/96	Tuzla, Sarajevo	3	44	467,000 (173,605.95)
04/29/96	Tuzla, Sarajevo, Šid	4	38	225,000 (83,643.12)
08/16/96	Teslić	1	16	97,000 (36,059.48)
08/31/96	Kazakhstan	2	41	318,000 (118,215.61)
12/18/96	Kazakhstan (plane)	--	11	176,000 (65,427.51)
TOTAL		10	150	1,283,000 (476,951.67)

B. Other Aid Campaigns Abroad

1. Burned Kazakhstan Children

After returning from the convoy in Kazakhstan at the end of June 1995, we announced a need to help three children from Kazakhstan who were severely burned during a fire at their home in Petropawłowsk. The fight for their lives lasted a year at the hospital in Petropawłowsk and later in Almaty. Transplants, reconstructive surgery, and contracture procedures were possible only outside Kazakhstan. The Ministry of Health declared to cover treatment at the Plastic Surgery Hospital in Polanica Zdrój. We collected approx. 7000 PLN (2,602.23 USD) for the children's trip to Poland. The long and repetitive treatment is now finished.

2. II Polish Pilgrimage from Kazakhstan

The concept behind the campaign, just like in previous years, was to allow the oldest living deportees, who never came to Poland and who cannot afford to do so by themselves, to visit the country during Christmas.

The Polish Association in Kazakhstan drafted a list of pilgrims. The oldest person was 88, while the youngest was 59 years old. The pilgrims were in Poland from December 20, 1996 until January 2, 1997. They saw Wawel Castle and Old Town in Cracow, took part in Holy Mass celebrated by Cardinal Macharski, and a Christmas gathering organized by Gazeta Wyborcza. They went to the convent in Jasna Góra.. They spent Christmas and New Year's Eve with families in 17 cities throughout Poland. In Warsaw the pilgrims met with the Archbishop of Poland, Cardinal Józef Glemp, and visited the Royal Castle and Wilanów Palace. The Polish Union Association organized a meeting and refreshments attended by representatives of the Polish Sejm and Senate.

The flight from Kazakhstan was financed by Polish Union and PAH. The cost of the issue of passports, transportation in Kazakhstan, the transportation of Christmas packages to given districts, and even some room and board, was covered from a public collection, which was supported by the Polish Senate, Norway, companies, banks, and hundreds of individuals nationwide. Many companies and institutions provided room and board, transportation, insurance, telephone service, and on-the-ground flight service free of charge.

We collected a total of 365,943.49 PLN (136,038.47 USD). Air transportation cost 190,564 PLN (70,841.64 USD). The cost of travel documents, transportation to the airport in Kazakhstan, spending money, insurance, room and board in Poland, and the transportation of packages in Kazakhstan yielded 31,597.37 PLN (11,746.23 USD). We bought a TV set for a school in Karaganda for 690 PLN (256.51 USD). We will allocate the remaining funds for helping Poles in Kazakhstan in 1997.

C. Refugee Counseling Center

In 1996 172 refugees took advantage of the assistance offered by the Refugee Counseling Center, primarily from Somalia, Liberia, Algeria, and former USSR states (Armenia and Georgia). In addition, we worked with 109 people registered in the past.

The ways in which we helped:

- informing about the basics of Polish law, and in particular about the procedure of being granted refugee status, legalizing their stay, and the right to work;
- assisting in official formalities;
- assisting in obtaining necessary documents from their country of origin and third states;
- finding a place to live;
- assisting in finding employment;
- in-kind contributions: clothing, food, and appliances;
- assisting in receiving medical benefits (in particular financing the operation of an Armenian refugee and hospitalizing three people free of charge) and purchasing medicine;
- financing Polish lessons for refugees;
- assisting in the repatriation of two Bosnian families, two Ormanian families, and individuals from Algeria and Angola.

Due to an increase in the homeless rate among people applying for refugee status in Poland, in June 1996 PAH opened the Refugee Shelter in Warsaw. The shelter is meant for people who applied for refugee status and are awaiting a reply but could not reside in any of the governmental facilities due to a shortage of space. There are a lot of people in this situation. The lack of housing is made even worse by the fact that the procedure for applying for refugee status may last even several years. About 30 people may find shelter at the house at once. We feed them and provide them with medical attention.

This project was made possible with the support of UNHCR and private sponsors.

We continued our Integration Program for recognized refugees. There were 16 participants in 1996. We assisted refugees in renting and furnishing apartments. We helped them in public offices, particularly in applying for permanent resident status. We aided refugees in finding employment, receiving educational scholarships, and nostrifying diplomas.

We worked with the Helsinki Human Rights Foundation, Caritas, the Polish Red Cross, and Amnesty International to best help refugees.

We also became a member of CEFRAN, which groups NGOs working on behalf of refugees in Central Europe.

D. Humanitarian Education

The “Polish Humanitarian Action” Exhibit

On March 18, 1996 we opened an exhibit depicting the Foundation’s humanitarian education efforts. The exhibit presented humanitarian convoys, the countries we help, and what we do here in Poland. The exhibit was on show for a month in the Polish Press Agency building in Warsaw, and then lent out to schools and galleries in many Polish cities.

The “Should You Be Tolerant?” Contest

We organized a literary/artistic contest from March 1 to April 30, 1996 for children and youth called “Should You Be Tolerant?” In lieu of the fact that currently a lack of tolerance is one of the key Polish and global problems, it is necessary that we continue to make young people aware of this situation.

Children’s and Youth’s Television Station took part in organizing the contest. The best essays were printed in “LUZ,” a monthly for children. The winning artworks were shown and discussed in the children’s TV program “Ciuchcia.”

The Hope Campaign

On May 31, 1996 Polish Humanitarian Action began a campaign to help children in Bosnia under the “Hope Campaign” slogan. The concept behind the campaign was to emphasize that International Children’s Day should be celebrated by children throughout the whole world, irrespective of the situation in the country in which they came to live. Every contributor to the cause received a pin with the “Hope Campaign” logo that was designed on the grounds of drawings made by Sarajevo children. In the first stage, meaning by August 17, 1996, we collected 16,336.53 PLN (6,073.06 USD), which we allocated to buy book bags and school supplies. On August 17, 1996 the gifts were taken to children in Teslić and Sarajevo.

Besides private individuals, 29 elementary schools, 16 high schools, and 22 scout troops from throughout Poland participated in the effort.

The "Refugee" Exhibit

Polish Humanitarian Action, together with UNHCR, organizes an annual observance of Refugee Day. On October 7, 1996, as the key part of the program, we organized an exhibit of posters and photographs depicting the situation of refugees in Poland and abroad at the National Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw. The exhibit was sponsored by the PHARE Social Dialog program. The exhibit was on display at the museum until November 3 and it is currently made accessible to galleries and schools throughout Poland.

PAH Clubs

In September 1996 we began to establish youth PAH Club which, besides instigating activism in the local community (under the auspice of PAH), take an active part in the Foundation's activities. Elementary and high school children take part in the clubs, which are established in affiliation with schools and scout troops through Poland. At the end of 1996 there were clubs in Mrągowo, Lubin, and Rybnik.

Peace Packages

Since 1994 Polish youth has been preparing packages for children in Sarajevo and other Bosnian cities. PAH has already delivered about a thousand Peace Packages to schools, hospitals, and children's shelters in Bosnia. A Peace Package contains new school supplies, warm underwear, gloves, a hat, sweets, a plush animal or toy, a picture book, hygiene products, and a letter with the address of the person who prepared the package.

Meetings

PAH activists held 13 meetings with young people in, among others, Lublin, Radom, Pruszków, Żyrardów, Łomża, Radzymin, and Mrągowo.

Exhibits

02/07 – opening of the "Convoy" exhibit at the Polish Institute in Düsseldorf. The exhibit of 40 photographs illustrated PAH's operations. The mayor of Düsseldorf, the Polish Ambassador in Germany, NGO representatives, and journalists attended the opening.

03/15 - opening of the "Humanitarian Education" exhibit at the offices of the Polish Press Agency.

06/22 - opening of the "My Dreams of Peace" exhibit at the Warsaw City Hall. This exhibit came from the Anne Frank Foundation in Amsterdam. It includes 60 large-scale photographs of the war in Bosnia and heart-wrenching proof of suffering – drawings and poems written by children in Bosnia. The mayor of Warsaw and mayors attending ceremonies in honor of Warsaw's four-hundred year anniversary attended the opening. At the opening the mayor of Warsaw declared to support the effort to rebuild the school in Sarajevo and appropriated 30,000 USD for the cause.

06/25 – “A Concert for Sarajevo” performed by the Polish Radio Choir and the Radio Symphonic Orchestra from Cracow. The concert was held at the Św. Katarzyna Church. The choir and orchestra performed Roman Maciejewski’s “Requiem Against War.”

10/07 – opening of the “Convoy” exhibit at the Polish Institute in Lipsk. Hans Koschnick, NGO representatives, and journalists attended the exhibit.

E. Aid to Children in the Bieszczady Mountains

After having become acquainted with the problems and needs facing school students in Bieszczady and Pogórze, in November 1995 the Polish Humanitarian Action Foundation began a campaign, together with the Association for Helping Bieszczady Children in Lesko, to help children in Bieszczady schools.

A cash collection for this purpose brought in 331,677.42 PLN (123,300.16 USD) by the end of December 1996: COCA-COLA donated 187,080 PLN (69,546.47 USD), the State Treasury Agricultural Ownership Agency donated 73,000 PLN (27,137.55 USD), while PAH collected 71,597.42 PLN (26,616.14 USD).

In 1996 we:

- fed 3231 children in 79 elementary and high schools and 423 children in 9 pre-schools from December 15 to April 30 (85 schooldays),
- paid for boarding 48 children at the Complex of Construction Schools and the high school in Lesko,
- covered the cost of transporting 50 children to school,
- organized help from families who contacted PAH or the Association for Helping Bieszczady Children for 129 children from the poorest families.

We also furnished Bieszczady schools in kitchen appliances and camping equipment, aimed at helping them run shelters. In return, these school will be able to independently earn money to feed their students in the future. We delivered 26 refrigerators equipped in freezers, 5 washing machines, food processors, electric teapots, other electric equipment, furniture, kitchen equipment, hotel furnishings, and other items worth in excess of 200,000 PLN (74,349.44 USD) (some of the equipment was purchased for 37,552.74 PLN (13,960.13 USD), while a part came from sponsors). The things were unloaded at the Association for Helping Bieszczady Children in Lesko, from where it was delivered to schools.

F. Regional Offices

PAH regional offices located in Cracow, Toruń, and Cracow have their own programs for helping those in greatest need, carried out in their own area. Among other things, they help the homeless, bring aid to the poorest families, and feed schoolchildren. In addition, these offices participated in organizing convoys (collecting contributions and looking for trucks), nationwide collections, in the Hope Campaign, Peace Package, and other campaigns of the Humanitarian Education program, as well as the II Polish Pilgrimage from Kazakhstan.

G. Awards Received in 1996

Atsuhito Nakata Memorial, an annual award granted by a Japanese foundation established by a Japanese volunteer who died during a UN peace campaign in Cambodia in 1993. Janina Ochojska transferred the whole sum of 300,000 yen to Polish Humanitarian Action.

1 USD = 2.69 PLN