

THE CAMP FOR POLISH REFUGEE CHILDREN AT BALACHADI, NAWANAGAR [INDIA]

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The Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies recently published a letter by Maharaja Shatrughyasinghji entitled "Holocaust Refugees and the Maharaja of Jamnagar."¹ The Maharaja in question was his father, Digvijaysinghji. This letter was written because of an inquiry by me and therefore I feel responsible for making sure that the correct facts are entered into the historical record.

This story was of great interest to me because my primary area of research is the maharajas and other Indian princes. I have been gathering information also on the Jews of India with special focus on Jews in Cochin, Janjira, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and elsewhere in "Princely" India.

The rulers of Nawanagar [also known after its capital as Jamnagar] were styled maharajas or jamsahebs. The princely family was known internationally for its cricketers including Maharaja Ranjitsinghji, who was a superstar in nineteenth century England. Four generations of the Jamnagar royal family have played test cricket: Ranji and Duleep for England and Indrajit and Ajay Jadeja for India.

Maharaja Digvijaysinghji became Jamsaheb of Nawanagar in 1933. He promoted the study of Ayurvedic medicine because "medicine is the largest factor that ensures the proper safeguarding of social well-being...the new revival in her art and letters, and her aspiration for political independence, did naturally awaken her interest in the past of her medical history and achievement and led to the joy of a glorious discovery."²

This Jamsaheb was an effective Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes from 1937 to 1942, a member of the Imperial War Cabinet, and President of Rajkumar College [Rajkot] from 1939 to 1966. When India became independent, his state was integrated along with many other princely states into a newly formed entity called Saurashtra. He became its first ceremonial governor (*Rajpramukh*) and presided over the laying of the foundation for the new Somnatha Temple, which many Hindus identified with the eternal national identity of India.³ He later represented India at the United Nations.

I had previously located passing references to Jews or possible Jews in Nawanagar. 1) According to Roland Wild, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, "always held that the Rabaris, who live a nomad existence in the Barda Hills, were descendents of one of the lost tribes of Israel, and the cast of their features, the curious details of their religious ceremonies, their facial decorations, their nomad habits, and their scriptural names, certainly lend support to this belief." I am unaware of any other such fanciful claim about the Rabaris though many other persons have claimed that various groups on the subcontinent were descended from the "Ten Lost Tribes."⁴ 2) F.C. Nissen was manager and engineer-in-chief of the Jamnagar & Dwarka Railway.⁵ Many Bene Israel worked on the railroads and Nissim may be a Jewish name. 3) Rufus Isaacs,

the Jewish Viceroy Lord Reading, visited Nawanagar several times.⁶ 4) A statue of Edwin Montagu, a Jew who was Secretary of State for India, was unveiled at Jamanagar by Lord Reading in 1925.⁷ When I asked Anirudhsinhji, a member of the Nawanagar nobility, to take me to see it, he said it had been taken down because he was a "bloody Englishman." 5) A German physician, Karl Eisenstaedt, was a tuberculosis specialist at the Irwin Hospital. I was unable to verify whether he was Jewish, but a large percentage of Jewish refugees in India were doctors. Jewish refugee doctors did work in other cities like Bikaner and Jaipur.

With only these meager results in mind, I was surprised to learn there were many refugees in Nawanagar. The source was reliable: Navtej Sarna, the press counselor at the Indian Embassy in Washington, had met in Warsaw with members of the "Children of Jamnagar" group, which was affiliated with a Polish-Indian friendship society. They told him that they had been refugees in Nawanagar.

Though most Poles are Catholic, I just assumed that the refugees were Jewish. My inquiries at both Yad Vashem and the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. revealed no knowledge of any such Jewish refugees.

I asked Sam Daniel, a leader of the Indian Jewish community in New York City, to investigate. He passed the request on to J.M. Benjamin of New Delhi. Mr. Benjamin contacted Maharaja Shatrughyasinghji, the son of the ruler of Jamnagar during World War II. The Maharaja sent the aforementioned letter in reply. Mr. Benjamin wrote to Sam Daniel: "You may request your friend who is doing research on this subject to give as much publicity as possible in the American media."

Before I did that, I wanted to verify the specific facts involved. In England, I finally found and interviewed eight members of the Association of Poles in India 1942-1948.⁸ They were very forthcoming and shared a great deal of information, which is to be published in a book co-edited by T. Glazer and Jan Siedlecki.⁹ The group supplied me with English translations of the writings of Wieslaw Stypula, who had been one of the children at Balachadi.

By combing the India Office Records in the British Library, I located many original documents. I took photocopies of these documents to be housed permanently at the Sainik School, which was built later on the site where the Polish camp had been.

One must not be in any way critical of the account by the son of Maharaja Digvijaysinhji. He was just a boy at the time and there had been little or no interest in these events until about 40 years later, when the Poles surprised the locals by erecting a memorial in honor of his father's actions. The book entitled *Poles in India 1942-48 in the Light of Documents and Personal Reminiscences* is to be first published in Polish because these events were not discussed during the communist days in Poland. Therefore, neither Poles nor Indians had any familiarity with the facts.

Many of the other accounts, even those contemporaneous with events, contradict each other. Fanciful numbers and unreliable or misleading statements are the norm in this discourse. For example at a January 9, 1998, Rashtrapati Bhavan banquet in honor of the President Aleksandar Kwasniewski of Poland, the President K.R. Narayan of India spoke of more than 1,000 Polish refugee children in Nawanagar.

He failed to even mention that the largest Polish camp containing several thousand refugees was elsewhere in India.

The following statements in the article published in the *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* do not stand up to historical scrutiny:

[1] The many accounts of the number of children all contradict each other. The number clearly never reached 1,200 but was more like half of that.

[2] There was no ship that sailed around the African continent. In fact, the children came overland though a few may have traveled by ship from Karachi to Nawanagar.

[3] The Maharaja did not have to fight against British unwillingness to let the Poles enter India. Though the British did not let a boat filled with Jewish refugees land in Bombay in 1939, the British did not refuse landing permission to these Polish refugees.

[4] In fact, the British initiated the plans to bring the Poles to India and asked several Indian princes to provide land for their camps.

[5] Maharaja Digvijaysinhji did not bring the Poles to his states as "personal guests" rather than refugees. The British and the Polish Government in Exile knew them as refugees.

[6] Though the Maharaja provided a wonderful piece of land and was a gracious and giving host who treated them as beloved guests, the refugees were not financially supported mainly by the Maharaja.

[7] Only a few of the children were Jewish. Maharaja Shatrushalsinhji correctly refers to the refugee children as Poles not as Polish Jews. A review of the circumstances will show why there were few Jews at Balachadi, whereas there were many Jewish refugees elsewhere in India.

[8] The letter gives the impression that the only Polish refugees in India were in Nawanagar state. In fact, the largest numbers were in Valivade in another princely state, Kohlapur. Most Polish Jews went to Bombay.

All this in no way takes away from the Maharaja Digvijaysinhji's great services to these unfortunate children. He was a great man for many reasons. However, research reveals a different picture of what did happen. Further research will certainly reveal many more facts and will correct some of these mistakes.

Many Poles were deported to the then U.S.S.R. after the Russian invasion and occupation of the eastern part of Poland in 1939. Anthony Eden described the situation in the following words: "The Poles are pressing us hard again over their civilians in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, whom they represent as living in harrowing conditions, diseased and threatened by death from starvation. Our own

reports on the conditions of those Poles who have reached Persia recently confirm much of what the Poles tell us...The Poles argue that between the German extermination policy and the fate of their people in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the basis of their national life is being destroyed."¹⁰

The fate of the children was of particular concern because, as A.W.G Randall of the British Foreign Office put it, they "are excellent material, and will be very valuable for the future Poland."¹¹ Many were orphans or had only one parent from whom they had become separated.

Later on, when Germany attacked Russia a treaty was made between the Polish Government in London and the Soviet Union. Soon after an army was being created in Russia out of the Polish Prisoners of War. Some of their families were then allowed to accompany them out of Russia and it was within this framework that the Polish children, orphans or half orphans, came to Jamnagar.¹²

Places of accommodation for displaced Poles were developed across the globe largely with British help. A 1995 book *Tulacze Dzieci-Exiled Children*¹³ gives extensive photo-documentation of refugees, Polish orphans and other children in India, Iran, Lebanon, Palestine, Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda, North and South Rhodesia, New Zealand, and Mexico. The Foreign Office saw India as "the most promising solution...either as a destination or a transit territory, or both."¹⁴

The British chose not to house these refugees in British India but in the Indian Princely States, which were in subordinate alliance with them. The Secretary of State for India gave the reason that there was "congestion in the hill stations and lack of housing."¹⁵

A.W.G. Randall of the Foreign Office suggested an appeal to princely states like Mysore, Hyderabad, and Patiala.¹⁶ Eventually an orphanage was set up at Balachadi within Nawanagar State and a larger refugee camp housing about 5000 persons, mainly women and children, was established at Valivade in Kohlapur State.

POLISH REFUGEE CAMPS AND SETTLEMENTS IN INDIA¹⁷

Bombay: Polish consulate and Representatives of Polish Government in London	1933 to October 12, 1946
Bombay: Jewish refugees	Starting in 1930's
Bandra, Bombay: Temporary accommodation for children on way to Balachadi	April 12 to August 16, 1942
Panchgani: Health and recuperation center	April 1942 to November 1946
Balachadi, Nawanagar, Western India [now Gujarat]: Orphanage	August 16, 1942 to November 1, 1946
Karachi: Transit camp in country club	November 4, 1942 to October 2, 1945
Malir near Karachi: Temporary camp	March 2, 1943 to August 18, 1943
Valivade, Kohlapur, Deccan [now Maharashtra]	July 23, 1943 to February 22, 1948

From the start, the agreement was that the Polish Government in Exile would reimburse all of the expenses of the "upkeep and maintenance of Polish refugees."¹⁸ The British Treasury suggested the following plan: "Polish Government are [sic] financed in respect of their sterling area expenditure out of the Credit made available by H.M.G. The Government of India should render accounts at regular intervals, say once every two months, to the Polish Consul General, Bombay. The latter could telegraph details to his Government in London, who would then ask H.M.G. Treasury for authority to pay out of the Credit granted by H.M.G."¹⁹

The Government, while retaining financial control, left "internal administration in the hands of a delegate of the Polish Ministry of Social Welfare subject to authoritative advice from the Government of India." Those involved also sought charitable contributions to defray costs. I was unable to obtain figures indicating the actual costs and what percentage was paid by the Polish Government in Exile and what percentage came from the largesse of the hundreds of Indian princes [maharajas, rajas, nawabs, and the nizam] and other sources.

The Polish Government in Exile in London paid for the construction of the Balachadi camp. The Polish Children Fund, subscribed to by some maharajas, business enterprises and wealthy individuals maintained the camps. The secretary was Captain A.W.T. Webb, Principal Refugee Officer in the Government of India.

The children's education was also paid for from the same Fund, supplemented by the Ministry of Education of the then Polish Government in London.²⁰

The Government of India estimated the costs as follows on July 2, 1942:

So far as we can estimate the cost of maintenance of 500 Polish children over a period of two years will be [a] non-recurring Rs. 200,000. On construction of camp [b] non-recurring initial transport of equipment and children and urgent medical attention Rs. 50,000; and [c] recurring Rs. 500,000 at average Rs. 42 per mensem per children. Thus on assumption that the camp will be occupied for two years inclusive average cost per head about Rs. 60 monthly. Receipts to date Rs. 53,700 including grant Rs. 50,000 for H.E. the Viceroy's War Purposes [?Fund].²¹

The figures given a few months later were: "Capital outlay at roughly 2.5 lakhs per 1,000 children and maintenance Rs. 40 per mensem per child. With rising costs however, these figures may have to be slightly enhanced."²²

Webb wrote "one body of Poles reached Askabad [sic] in Uzbekistan [sic], on the borders of Iraq. Then typhus broke out, killing most of the adults. The Polish orphans India received were mostly from that area and came into India via Meshed and Narkundi in Baluchistan."²³ A second group also traveled overland.²⁴

No trip was made by ship around Africa. The only ship involved with the first group of child refugees was the Polish ship "Kosciuszko" whose crew visited the children in Bandra and gave them a banner that later flew as a "symbol of Poland" from the mast in the camp in Nawanagar.²⁵ Stypula writes of a third transport, not mentioned by other authors, which he says, traveled from Meshed overland via Zahidan and Hyderabad to Karachi, where the refugees boarded a ship for Jamnagar.²⁶ If this were true, the ship would have docked, not in Jamnagar city, but probably at the port at Bedi.

The Jamsaheb of Nawanagar and the Maharaja of Patiala had been "approached informally" by the British Government and "expressed willingness to permit camp sites for 2,000 and 5,000 children respectively in their states."²⁷

The Indian Office Library's records on this matter include some confusing and contradictory statements: "His Highness was originally approached by the Government of India as to whether he would be willing to receive in Nawanagar State some 2,000 Greek children evacuees. To this request His Highness assented. Some time later a further communication was received saying for Greek children read Polish children and for 2,000 read 500. These Polish children were being evacuated from Russia through Persia, Baluchistan, and so into India."²⁸

Later correspondence spoke of 3,000 not 5,000 in Patiala and suggested that the Nawanagar camp be filled first.²⁹ In any case, the British had difficulty obtaining any further response from Patiala.³⁰ No refugees were ever sent to Patiala.

Maharaja Digvijaysinhji, the Jamsaheb of Nawanagar, was a man of his word according to Major Geoffrey Clarke, an officer of Nawanagar State. The Foreign Office informed the Poles "the Nawanagar State authorities have done an excellent

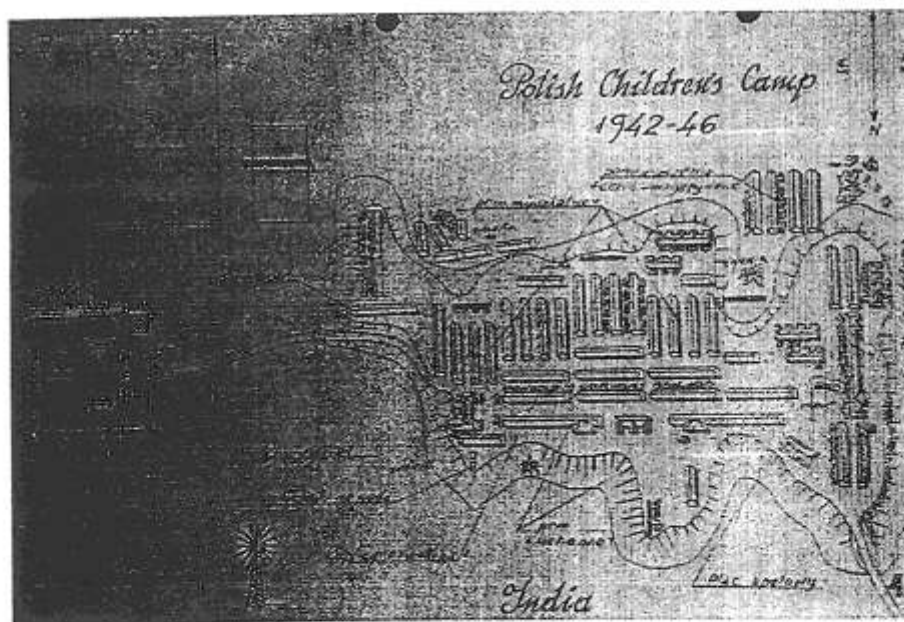
piece of work."³¹ According to Webb, the cost was "about six lakhs. Accommodation for 800 orphans and Staff."³²

The authorities informed the Jamsaheb that the first group would be arriving in six weeks: "The State Authorities immediately took the matter in hand and within six weeks from the receipt of the intimation of the children's arrival, a camp consisting of Pukka Masonry buildings, complete with furniture, was in being and ready for their reception though the site was at Balachadi, seventeen miles from Jamnagar and an equal distance from the nearest railway station."³³

The state authorities built a road about one mile long, installed telephone equipment and machinery to insure water supply, and supervised the contracts between local merchants and camp authorities.

The Balachadi camp was built on summer palace grounds lent by the Jamsaheb. The Jamsaheb "placed at their disposal his gardens, tennis courts, and swimming pool."³⁴ His guesthouse was used as a school. No records documenting the money paid out of his funds have been published to my knowledge; I would guess that the sums involved were quite substantial.

The Camp for Polish Children at Balachadi



T. Herzog did these sketches, supplied by Jan Siedlecki, when the camp was still open. Many changes have been made on this site since the Poles left.

Maharaja Digvijaysinhji himself welcomed the children. The photographs in the book *Tulacz Dzieci-Exiled Children* show the ease and affection that existed between him and the Polish children.³⁵ He even attended a Polish language performance of *Cinderella*.

The main road through the camp was named Digvijaysinhji Avenue and it was expected that "in the New Warsaw to be rebuilt after the war, one of the principal streets will be re-named with His Highness's name."³⁶ Jan Siedlecki says that a private school in Poland recently has been named Jamsaheb School after him.³⁷

Due to railroad congestion, each transport group of children could not exceed 500.³⁸ Details given in an anonymous report in an India Office file are as follows: The first group led by Madame Banasinska, wife of the Polish Consul-General in India, consisted of 260 children. The second group, which was delayed by heavy rains in Quetta, increased the number of children to "some 750" with the expectation at that time that a total of "up to 2,000" were expected.³⁹ However, the many subsequent accounts of the actual numbers of children who reached the camp conflict greatly.

Routes Taken from the USSR to India



W. Stypula is writing the chapter on Jamnagar for the book co-edited by Glazer and Siedlecki for the Association of Poles in India 1942-1948. He says that the first group of 92 children with five guardians was evacuated to Meshad on March 12, 1942, and left Bandra for Balachadi on July 16, 1942. After quarantine and medical examination in Meshad, they were taken by road to Quetta and by train through Delhi to Bandra.

He says the second group was made up of 237 children and nineteen guardians. Monsoon rains delayed their progress three weeks until a ferry could safely take them across the Indus River to Hyderabad in Sind province. They arrived at Balachadi on September 27, 1942.

Stypula also noted a third transport of 250 children, which traveled from Meshad overland via Zahidan and Hyderabad to Karachi where they boarded a ship for Jamnagar.⁴⁰ Many other authors overlooked this group.

Martin Moore, a special correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph*, gave a third set of numbers claiming that the first group at Balachadi was made up of 800 children and the second one was only 280.⁴¹ In January 1943, a New Delhi newspaper gave the total number as 600.⁴² The British Foreign Office gave the number as "700 or so" in October of that year. Jan Siedlecki gives the number as 658.

No information indicates that there was ever anything like 1,200 children in Balachadi. Possibly Maharaja Shatrughyasinghji heard the story of "1227 survivors from Poland, including orphaned children" who "arrived in transit to Palestine."⁴³ Though Jewish relief officials sent a Polish Jew, Dr. H. Cynowicz, it is unclear from the reference in the book by Joan G. Roland whether they were all Jews, whether they were on a ship, and whether all of them wound up leaving India. Non-Jewish Polish refugees were also sent to Palestine and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Stypula also describes a group of girls from orphanages in Iran who journeyed through Tehran, Isfahan, Jucuba, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, and Baroda where they went at the invitation of the Gaekwar of Baroda. Neither Stypula nor I found any further mention of this group and he feels they were possibly incorporated into the Balachadi group.⁴⁴

Even the lower numbers related above couldn't all be correct as they contradict each other. Raj Patel, an 'old boy' of the Sainik School knows the site well and believes, "It is not possible to house 1200 children on that plateau where their camp was. At any point in time, there were a maximum of 200 to 250 children which has been confirmed by a number of people I met."⁴⁵ It is unclear whether this means he believes that the estimates ranging from 600 to 700 are inaccurate or that they reflect the total number rather than the number at any given time.

After reviewing all the evidence, Roman Gutowski has come up with yet another set of numbers. Gutowski spent time in Balachadi and was sent back to Warsaw after the War. He is presently the Secretary of the Association of Poles in India 1942-1948. His findings are accepted as authoritative by Siedlecki, who is himself a most careful and thoughtful researcher, and therefore should represent the best summary to date. These figures add up to 636 children and 22 guardians:

The first transport in March 1942 consisted of 92 children under care of five adults. They traveled from Ashkhabad (in Russia) to Meshad (in Persia), where a week later they

were joined by additional 74 children. All these children traveled in army lorries through Zahedan to Quetta (now in Pakistan) in India, then via Lahore and Delhi to Bandra, on the outskirts of Bombay. Here they were accommodated in bungalows from the beginning of April and then in mid-August transferred to Balachadi.

A second transport of 220 children with their seventeen guardians traveled again from Ashkhabad to Meshad in mid-July 1942, and after a stopover in Quetta arrived in Balachadi by the end of September 1942.

The third transport of some 250 children traveled from Meshad via Zahedan and Hyderabad (now in Pakistan) to Karachi, from where they went by boat to Jamnagar, arriving in Balachadi at the beginning of December 1942.⁴⁶

The first principal of a school at Balachadi was Maria Skorzyzna who established a primary school with 15 classes. Older children were sent to Valivade, Panchgani, Mount Abu, and even a convent in Karachi for high school.⁴⁷ According to another source, Professor Hadala of the Polish Ministry of Education headed a staff, which consisted of 23 Polish and two English teachers in 1943.⁴⁸ The English teachers were Brother Stanislaw and a Czech Brother Oskar who had been missionaries in Burma. The school emphasized Polish culture and language. A photograph of a girl taken by the Nawanganagar court photographer shows her in Polish national costume.⁴⁹

Originally, I had just assumed that this was a camp for Jewish children. However, the camp commandant was Fr. Franciszek Pluta, who was a Catholic chaplain in the Polish Army. Mary "Bunt" Allen, whose father headed the Jamsaheb's motor pool, remembers children in Polish dress singing Christmas carols and Polish songs as well as acting in nativity plays. When I learned these things, I wondered if there had been any Jews in Balachadi.

Two items in the files of the India Office Library suggested the possible presence of Jewish children among the Polish refugees. In August 1942, the Polish Government reported that 21 Jews with Palestine visas and another 21 evacuated from Burma were being included by [the Government of India] in the quota allotted for Polish children from Soviet Russia. They earnestly requested reconsideration so as to allow the 42 Jews to stay on in India without prejudice to the children's quota" especially those without onward visas.⁵⁰ The Government of India replied that the, "21 Poles from Burma may remain in India if included in above quotas; otherwise they may proceed to Palestine for which visas are available. Other Poles arrived in India in transit with Palestine visas...Expulsion orders were accordingly issued on their indicating refusal to depart and the Polish Consulate-General's failure to agree to inclusion in sponsored quota...We would emphasize that there has been no discrimination against Poles in transit."⁵¹ A 1942 letter from Anthony Eden stated, "a great proportion of the Polish children are Catholics."⁵² This suggested that some non-Catholic children were known to be among the refugees.

Stypula wrote that the "majority of the children [in Balachadi] were Polish citizens but there were also Ukrainians, Byelorussians and a few Jews. The Jewish

children did not stay long as they either joined their families or were taken over by Jewish orphanages.⁵³ Mrs. Daniela Szydło, who was in the Balachadi camp, gave me the names of five Jewish children who were there: Eliza and Maria Spalter, Roza Hoch, Zygmunt Mandel, and Cyla Rozengarten. Further discussion by London members of the Association of Poles in India led to two other names: Naomi Brammer and Ida Wanderszperk.

This list is composed mostly of girls. Yet Gutowski says: "With regard to the Jewish children amongst us, as far as we can now remember, when we arrived in Bombay, the girls were collected by the local rabbi, whilst a few boys remained with us and went to Balachadi." An Indian e-mail correspondent told the author there was another Jewish boy who went to Australia and was a ham radio operator, but he did not give the boy's name.⁵⁴ Perhaps other Jewish children can be found on the lists of Polish refugees to be found in the India Office Library files and at the Polish Institute and General Sikorski Museum in London.⁵⁵

Gutowski offers this explanation of why so few Jews were among the refugees in Balachadi and Valivade:

It must be emphasized that the Soviet authorities insisted that only ethnic Poles were allowed to leave, placing obstacles against 'minorities' such as Ukrainians, Byelorussians and Jews (all of whom were originally deported from Poland). Nevertheless the Polish organizers of the overland transport managed to 'smuggle out' some Jewish children amongst the Polish ones.

With regard to the Jewish children amongst us, as far as we can now remember, when we arrived in Bombay, the local rabbi collected the girls, whilst a few boys remained with us and went to Balachadi. When the second transport reached Meshad in July 1942, a representative of the Palestine Jewish agency in Tehran came to meet Dr. T. Lisiecki, who was in charge, with the result that a Jewish group was detached from us and in August they went in two army lorries to Tehran, where the Jewish committee took them. Their representative in Meshad was Mr. Jos[h]ua Pollak.⁵⁶

Most of the Polish and other European Jews seeking refuge in India had not been deportees in the Soviet Union. They mainly settled in Bombay and did not join the Polish Refugee Camps. Some Jewish doctors were also seconded from the Polish Army to work in the Polish Refugee Camps in India.⁵⁷

However, identifying Polish Jews from documents is often difficult. [See Appendix B] For example, so far I have been unable to ascertain whether Julius Stefan Norblin, whose paintings grace the Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur and the Palace in Morvi, was or was not Jewish.

When the children came to Balachadi, their medical and dental condition was generally poor. The State Medical Department provided two local physicians, Dr. Kirit Ashnai and Dr. Anant Joshi, who were retained even after a Polish doctor arrived.

Mrs. Geoffrey Clarke, the wife of the Jamsaheb's personal aide, was appointed to be liaison officer between camp authorities and both the Nawanganar and the government of India. She was a trained nurse and midwife.

A self-contained unit in Irwin Hospital in Jamnagar was planned. The Balachadi Camp dispensary contained more than 30 beds. The improvement in the medical condition of the first group was said to have been "most marked" within a few weeks.⁵⁸

However, Stanczyk, representing the Polish Minister of Social Welfare, found unhealthy conditions during a 1943 inspection. Randall of the Foreign Office wrote: "We pointed out that the Poles had originally been enthusiastic about Nawanganar, to which he replied that they were at first but that eventually the children's health suffered."⁵⁹ The Poles felt that an "epidemic of malaria was a constant threat."⁶⁰

Malaria was not mentioned in the 1943-44 Nawanganar annual administration report but statewide there were 230 cases of smallpox with 75 deaths and "the death rate per mille of population was 15.6 as against 14.8 of the last year" in Nawanganar. The Tuberculosis Department treated 1158 cases and 69 persons were given serum to prevent rabies.⁶¹

Another children's refugee camp within Nawanganar State was planned in Chela. A.W.T Webb wrote, "an existing RAF camp was taken over for 1,000 Polish orphans at a cost of six lakhs. It was never used due to Polish muddle and intrigue and finally returned to RAF."⁶² More probably, this plan was not carried out because of Polish perception that the climate in Kohlapur was more salubrious and healthful.

In 1943, the Polish Government unsuccessfully requested that all the children at Balachadi be transferred to Kohlapur. In 1944, Mr. Haluch, a visiting Polish government representative, found the Balachadi camp "not quite satisfactory" whereas Polish officials considered other Indian facilities "entirely satisfactory."⁶³ According to Stypula, "the number was falling each year until only 300 were left."⁶⁴ The Balachadi camp was closed in November 1946 and the children were transferred to Valivade in Kohlapur state. They were maintained by UNRRA (later IRO) and the British Government.

In 1947, as India moved towards freedom, the Maharaja of Kohlapur asked that the refugees leave his territory, since his state was unable to support them.⁶⁵ All the Poles were gone by 1948.

Many of the children from the orphanage were returned to Poland. Most adult Poles did not return to Poland but settled elsewhere across the world.⁶⁶

The reasons why return to Poland was an anathema to the adult Poles was lost on some British authorities. Webb was quite hostile in his remarks:

"Due to their past experiences at Russian hands and the belief [fostered by educated people among them chiefly for their own selfish ends] that Poland is now completely dominated by Russia, they have, with the exception of about 300 persons, refused absolutely to return to Poland. This attitude has certainly been strengthened by a promise made by Mr. Churchill [and, later confirmed by Mr. Bevin] that no Pole would be forced back to Poland against his or her will...For it seems that the previous

reactionary propaganda can only be cured by Communist inoculation...I suggested to Mr. Findley of UNRRA that an able pro-Polish Government propagandist should be sent to this country."⁶⁷

In 1947, a local Indian newspaper described the refugee's plight much more sympathetically:

The Government which sits in Warsaw is not the Government of the people of Poland...A rule of political terror, through the secret police, has been imposed on Poland...Russia is now trying to make Poland her political and economic satellite...Attempts are being made to prejudice the case of these Poles by declaring that they are not prepared to go back because they are afraid of misery and hard work...They still run the risk of deportations and even deaths. Besides, their return to Poland is likely to be interpreted as tacit acceptance of the present [communist] Warsaw Government to which they are opposed.⁶⁸

The question of the legal guardianship of the Polish orphans became a contentious matter after the end of World War II.⁶⁹ In the United States, the case of Elian Gonzalez raised questions about sending a single child back to a Communist country, even to be reunited with his father. Imagine the feelings among these patriotic Poles when so many orphaned Polish children could be sent back to a Communist country though they themselves had suffered terribly in the U.S.S.R.

A Nawanagar court gave guardianship of some of the children to Father Pluta. Retrospective permission had to be sought for the removal of the orphans from Balachadi to Valivade when the Balachadi camp was closed. According to H.H. Eggers, "in the opinion of an eminent Bombay lawyer, the formal documents are water-tight from a 'legal point of view'."⁷⁰

Father Pluta tried to take them to the United States where he lived between the World Wars. The British asked Australia to accept 400 children.

The Communist government of post-war Poland claimed that in international law and custom children who are displaced persons are always considered wards of the government of the country of origin.⁷¹ Many of the orphans were eventually returned to Poland.

Some of these "orphans" were reunited there with parents from whom they had become separated during the chaotic conditions of wartime. One thirteen-year-old boy was shown a letter ostensibly typed by his father to the Polish Government. He angrily said:

Why should my father write a typewritten letter to a stranger like you? Why would he not write to me? I am very anxious to meet my father but not in Poland today. How can I forget the death of my mother on the streets of the concentration camp in Russia where she was lying without food? If you try to take me away, I shall jump out of the train or the boat.⁷²

Many Poles had to migrate to other countries to avoid returning to Poland, the country for which they pined. As Teresa Glazer put it, they were "reluctant immigrants." Their opposition to the Communists created an awkward problem for the British.

There was a marked change in the attitude of the British people from the wartime years, when the Polish soldiers stationed in Scotland, or the Polish pilots who joined the R.A.F., had been welcome. At the end of the war, when the Russians were the favorites, we became rather embarrassing allies.⁷³

The Poles fondly remember their stay in India. As Maharaja Shatrughyasinghji wrote, the Jamsaheb did treat them as "royal guests" and "not as refugees." On February 28, 1985, some of the Children of Jamnagar came back and entered their names in the visitors' book of the Sainik School, which was started many years later on the site where the Polish camp once stood.

School officials had known nothing of their Polish predecessors. An Englishman who taught there was once puzzled when some one said that he was the first Pole the local man had seen in 20 years.

On April 16, 1989, Dr. Tadeusz Szelachowski, a high Polish government official, unveiled a large bronze memorial plaque commemorating the generous spirit of the Jamsaheb.⁷⁴ The figures on this monument show a woman in a sari holding a small child while another child clings to her. Raj Patel, one of the 'Old Boys' of the Sainik School, produced a first draft of an English translation of the Hindi text as follows:

Salutations to the land of Jamnagar, which, during the hard days of Second World War gave shelter to thousands of Polish children and welcomed them as guests. Grateful are the Polish people and those Polish children who stayed here during the years of 1942 to 1946. Hail, O far away land, thou art gratifying and of compassion.⁷⁵

It was my pleasure to introduce Raj Patel to eight members of the Association of Poles in India 1942-1948 at a memorable meeting in a Polish restaurant in London. Raj has befriended Jan Siedlecki and together in May 2000, they journeyed to a Warsaw reunion of the Polish refugees. Raj Patel has worked with Commander Dinesh Lambda, head of the Sainik School, to create a permanent memorial to the Poles at the school. He was also a conduit for information from Jan Siedlecki to me.⁷⁶

The Poles who were at Valivade in Kohlapur state were also grateful to 'their' Maharaja. The Bulletin of the Association of Poles in India 1942-1948 proclaims: "For five years, Valivade was our 'home [away] from home,' a sunny peaceful refuge after the harrowing deprivations of years spent in forced exile in Russia."⁷⁷ In 1998, they erected a monument in Kohlapur inscribed "Dispersed throughout the world we remember India with heartfelt gratitude."

APPENDIX A: SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

I did not go to Warsaw to check the Archiwum Akt Nowych, Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego, or the Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych. Tadeusz Krowczak, Director of the Archiwum Akt Nowych, suggested such files as "Ambasada RP w Londynie, Ministerstwo Pracy i Opieki Społecznej Rządu RP na Uchodźstwie or Generakny Pełnomocnik Rządu RP do Spraw Repatriacji w Warszawie."⁷⁸

I did not visit the archives of the Instytut Polski i Muzeum im. gen. Sikorskiego [Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum] in London, the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University, or the old Nawanagar State Archives in Jamnagar. The records of the Jewish Relief Association in Bombay have not been traced.⁷⁹ I was unable to obtain two papers by the anthropologist Henry Field in the Otto G. Richter Library of the University of Miami.⁸⁰

APPENDIX B: LIST OF REFUGEES WHO MAY BE JEWISH

Compiled by Mrs. W. Kleszko

Just for this paper, Mrs. W. Kleszko very kindly reviewed the names of Polish refugees on the list in the possession of the Association of Poles in India. This list did not identify persons by religion. Mrs. Kleszko listed those persons with obviously Jewish surnames. Additional indicators for inclusion on this list were those persons who had Jewish-sounding first names or parents with such names. See end of article for list.

NOTES

¹ His Highness Shatrushalyasinji, "Holocaust Refugees and the Maharaja of Jamnagar," in *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies*, Vol. 3 (April 2000), pp.137-9.

² *Charaka Samhita*, English and Gujarati translations (Jamnagar: Gulabkunverba Ayurvedic Society, 1949), Vol. 1, p. 3.

³ Richard H. Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), pp. 186-221.

⁴ Roland Wild, *The Biography of Colonel His Highness Shri Sir Ranjitsinhji Vibhaji, Maharaja Jam Saheb of Nawanagar G.C.S.I., G.B.E., K.C.I.E.* (London: Rich and Cowan, 1934), p. 205. For a photograph of a Rabari, see opposite p. 128.

⁵ Maneklal H. Shah, *Jam the Great: Sketches of the Life and Administration of the Late Jam Saheb of Nawanagar* (Nadiad: Gujarat-Times Office, 1934).

⁶ Shah, *Jam the Great*, photograph opposite p. 115.

⁷ Shah, *Jam the Great*, photograph after p. 106.

⁸ The organization's addresses are Kolo Polakow z Indii; Chairman, Z. Bartosz; ul. Grawerska 3/9 04-474 Warszawa, Poland and Mrs. W. Kleszko, Flat 18, Cleverly Estate; Wormholt Rd. London W12 OLX, UK. After a long unfruitful search for the group, the "Children of Jamnagar," Andrzej Przewoznik of Rada Ochrony Pamięci Walk i Męczeństwa in Warsaw provided me with this information. The "Children of Jamnagar," an informal group, became part of this larger group.