

Trails of Hope. The Odyssey of Freedom

<https://szlakinadziei.ipn.gov.pl/sne/exposures/places/9565,Tengeru.html>
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TENGERU

TENGERU IS A TOWN IN NORTHERN TANZANIA. AS IT IS LOCATED NEAR MOUNT KILIMANJARO, IT HAS EXCELLENT CONDITIONS FOR GROWING COFFEE. IT WAS A SEPARATE TOWN DURING WORLD WAR II AND IT IS NOW A SUBURB OF ARUSHA.

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Tengeru is a town in northern Tanzania. As it is located near Mount Kilimanjaro, it has excellent conditions for growing coffee. It was a separate town during World War II and it is now a suburb of Arusha.

The wave of refugees from the USSR initially headed for the Middle East, to Iran and Palestine. The authorities of the Polish Government in Exile were looking for places where those civilians could be relocated in order to ensure them decent living conditions. They appealed to the authorities of the United Kingdom to locate Poles in British colonies in Africa.

The British authorities initially declared their readiness to accept 10 thousand refugees but this figure was later raised to 31 thousand. The Polish Government in Exile accepted the British conditions – the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare started to organise the Polish settlements in Africa. On 27 August 1942, the first transport of 1,400 people evacuated from the Soviet Union arrived at the Port of Tanga located in what was then Tanganyika. In October, further groups arrived and were directed to Tengeru. Eventually, about 4 thousand people settled in this place.

The settlement was created on the slopes of Mount Meru in the foothills of Kilimanjaro. It was built completely from scratch, with 947 houses resembling the huts of the natives. The British authorities involved local tribes in help – they provided building materials and labour. The area of the settlement was divided into sections and groups, and the administration organised departments such as education, chaplaincy and health care. The costs of the refugees' stay were covered by the Polish government based on British loans. These funds were used to maintain the administration and infrastructure and to feed the residents of the settlement. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare covered the costs of the Polish administration, education, health care and chaplaincy.

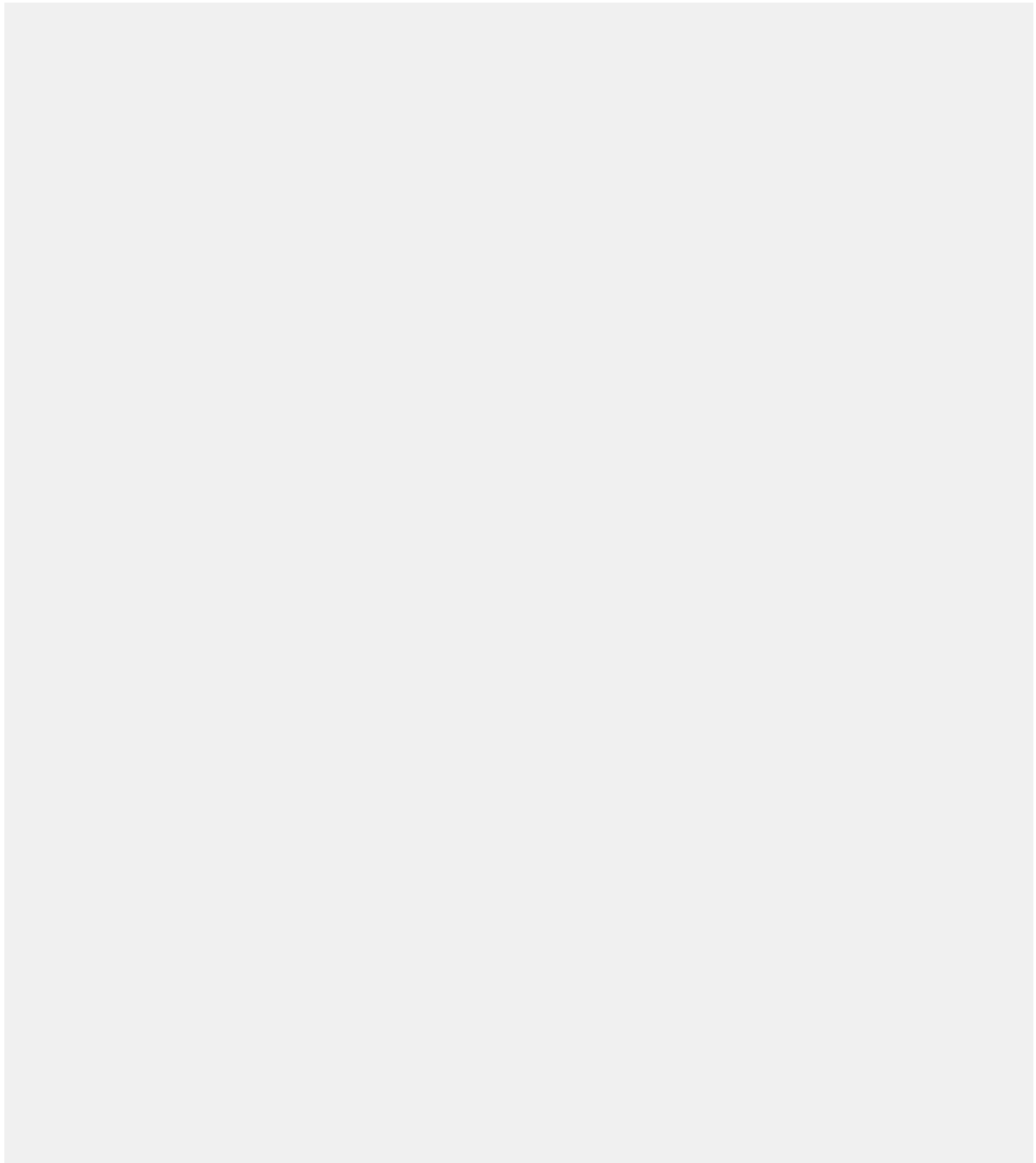
Organising the settlement and providing it with supplies involved many logistic problems due to the lack of necessary equipment or even roads to transport goods efficiently. Meanwhile, in addition to providing for living needs, efforts were made to provide education for young people and jobs for adults. Thanks to the perseverance of the British and Polish authorities, the refugees in the Polish enclaves on the Black Continent were eventually able to create tolerable living conditions. An independent school inspectorate was set up in Tengeru, reporting directly to the Ministry of Religion and Public Enlightenment. It managed three primary schools, a co-educational lower-secondary school, a vocational school and secondary-school classes. The schools were attended by about 250 pupils and students. Young people were given the opportunity to practise sport – there was an Inter-School Sports Club in Tengeru which had 78 sports teams. A scouting

organisation thrived here and published its own magazine - *Głos Harcerza* [The Scout's Voice].

The Poles had 415 acres of pasture land and 165 acres of arable land at their disposal, which was designated for growing vegetables and raising poultry and cattle. The local Poles also received support from the Polish American Council which sent donations of clothing and food.

The end of World War II marked the slow phasing out of the settlement. Poles openly expressed their dissatisfaction with the result of the Yalta Conference and had no desire to return to a Poland ruled by communists. The British authorities began to register the Polish population in order to prepare their repatriation to Europe, Australia or America. The last group of Poles left the settlement in Tengeru in August 1952 when they moved to the UK.

A Polish cemetery survives in Tengeru - the Cemetery of Polish War Refugees. About 150 Poles who died of exhaustion from their Soviet exile or from tropical diseases are buried there. The cemetery is tended by Polish missionaries and volunteers; damaged tombstones have been restored and rebuilt here in recent years. The Poles also left the buildings erected during World War II - one of them houses an agricultural college. Coffee is still grown on the plantations established by the Polish emigrants.



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