

future Polish-Soviet boundary, while Romer had had instructions not to discuss the boundary issue at all, for reasons already explained. Thus a complete impasse had been reached.

The Soviet government did allow the Polish Embassy to open relief centers in 20 cities and to appoint 421 roving delegates to give assistance to needy Poles. Early in 1942, however, the Soviet government complained that certain members of the Embassy staff and many of the delegates were engaging in espionage and encouraging a hostile attitude toward the Soviet authorities. [On closer inquiry it was found that the word espionage was used to mean intelligence work both on behalf of the Allies and on behalf of the Germans]. Some of the delegates were arrested, tried and found guilty. Others were released and then rearrested. On July 20, 1942 the relief organization was liquidated by order of the Soviet government.

In mid-April 1943 the National Catholic Welfare Conference in the United States issued a public statement condemning the Soviet authorities for holding 2 million Polish refugees as hostages, beating, starving and ejecting them from their homes and dismissing them from work to force them to give up their status as Polish citizens and accept Soviet passports instead. The disruption of Polish relief centers, the statement added, had been accompanied by confiscation of relief supplies from the United States. [William Shirer subsequently rebuked the National Catholic Welfare Conference for having supplied Dr. Goebbels with so useful a tidbit, which was exploited from Berlin without delay.] The Polish government, defeated in its purpose of keeping in touch with former Polish citizens, finally stated in its public declaration on the rupture of Polish-Soviet relations that it reserved the right to plead before the world the case of the Polish refugees and asked for continuation of relief. There the matter still stands.