

## Central Welfare Council, Poland

(*Rada Główna Opiekuncza*, RGO), Social Welfare Organization manned by Polish volunteers that was active in the *Generalgouvernement* from 1940-1945. The RGO was supervised by the German occupying authorities, but helped both Poles and Jews. The RGO was also in contact with the Polish underground. In 1941 one million people received aid from the council; in the fall of 1944, 1.2 million people were aid recipients. The first chairman of the RGO was Adam Ronikier, who was succeeded by Konstanty Tchorznicki in October 1943.

The RGO's headquarters were located in Warsaw, while Polish Welfare Committees worked in the *Generalgouvernement's* districts under the RGO's direction. Council representatives provided food, clothing, health services, fuel, and money. They ran welfare institutions and set up special services to take care of children, prisoners, and exiles. Public contributions and Polish institutions funded the council. Clothing and other supplies were sent from abroad; bought on the free market; donated by generous Poles; and given as gifts by various *Generalgouvernement* government offices.

The RGO had very good connections with the Polish underground and with groups within the Polish community. It did not give in to the German authorities who wanted their cooperation. In addition, as the council was officially regulated by the German occupying government, it tried to convince the authorities to better the living circumstances of the *Generalgouvernement* population.

Other welfare organizations were also active within the *Generalgouvernement* at this time. These included the Jewish Self-Help Society (*Zydowska Samopomoc Spoeczna*, ZSS), and the Ukrainian Central Council (*Ukrajnska Rada Główna*), which was part of the Main Welfare Council (*Naczelna Rada Opiekuncza*). There were Jewish workers within the RGO, and RGO leaders supported the ZSS. In addition, the council defended Jews before the German authorities on several occasions. After the ZSS was shut down in the fall of 1942, the RGO continued to hand out contributions from overseas to the Jews. The council also gave funding to the Jewish



Welfare Bureau (*Juedische Unterstuezungsstelle*), and in Cracow, it worked with the Zegota organization (the underground Council for Aid to Jews) on its rescue activities.