

Katarzyna Nowak (2019)

## “To Reach the Lands of Freedom”: Petitions of Polish Displaced Persons to American Poles, Moral Screening and the Role of Diaspora in Refugee Resettlement

Data opublikowania: 07.04.2020

Poleca Redakcja Pol-Int

Numer/tom 16/5

Ilość stron 621-642

ISSN: Print: 1478-0038 Online: 1478-0046

Historia, Socjologia

Angielski

In 1949, in the wake of the USA's Displaced Persons Act of 1948, the American Committee for the Resettlement of Polish Displaced Persons received thousands of letters from refugees of peasant and worker background residing in camps in Germany and Austria. These potential immigrants appealed to the Polish diaspora for help with securing assurances of accommodation and work which would enable them to resettle in the USA. This paper investigates the discursive strategies of the authors and the wider meanings of their emigration endeavour. Firstly, it demonstrates that non-elite Displaced Persons (DPs) adopted the language of martyrology, patriotism, anti-Communism and freedom to maximise their chances of emigration. These DPs did not evoke the language of rights as they appealed to the traditional network of support, based on benevolence and familiarity. Secondly, it argues that the American Poles and Polish social elites played a crucial role in resettlement of the DPs, providing an additional layer of screening, here called 'the moral screening'. It is an example of how ethnic and cultural communities mediated the resettlement procedures supervised by international humanitarian organisations. Using a 'history from below' approach, this article argues that during this episode of migration, political and economic ideological underpinnings intertwined.