

## **American Jewish Relief Committee Report on Postwar Poland, 1919**

From: American Jewish Relief Committee for Sufferers from the War, *What Major Davis of the American Red Cross Commission saw of the suffering Jews in Poland* (New York, 1919), n.p..

### With the American Red Cross in Poland.

*Excerpts from Letter written by Dr. (Major) H. I. Davis to Mrs. Davis*

Poland, Warsaw Mar. 23, 1919

I returned to Warsaw the day before yesterday after an eight-day tour of inspection of the Polish fighting fronts, cities and villages behind them, and large centers outside Warsaw.

My trip was extensive—200 kilometers—by special train, guarded by Polish troops; before we were thru we used our armored trains, horses, peasants' carts, automobiles, ambulances, and our feet.

I saw the actual fighting fronts of the Poles, Bolsheviks, and Ukrainians. Rifle in my hand and with my 45-Colt in my overcoat pocket, I walked thru trenches and heard for the first time the peculiar music of a shell. I rode horseback to the farthest villages, visited the cities of Kovno, Prohnorsk, Vladimir, Volynski, Brest-Litovsk, Chelm and as far east as Pinsk

What I saw was beyond description. It oversteps all possible limits of imagination or dreams and they are often far fetched. Whole districts are bare, no cultivated fields, homes burned and destroyed, whole cities demolished, no horses, no cattle and the people, Good God! There were moments when I wished I was never born to see what I did see.

Thousands and thousands of children, old men and women without clothing, warmth or food, racked of typhus (in some places half the population sick) and other diseases. Wanderers by the thousands trying to return to their homes from which they were driven out by Russians or Germans. Starving and dying women and children deliriously crying for bread. Huddled together in synagogues, men and women, all too weak to stand up or move about piteously stretching their hands toward you. And those faces, emaciated, thin, burning eyes, listless, unable to appreciate anything you may say to them, only begging for a piece of bread.

In the City of Pinsk I saw hundreds of children, women and inmates of hospitals who did not have a piece of bread for four days. And the bread they are asking for—a filthy mixture of a little flour with bark of trees or leaves, sawdust and God knows what. What do you think of a diet of wild horse-chestnuts for those sick with typhus or of warm water with a little cornmeal mixed with it?

It was a purgatory which I saw, but a purgatory of human creation for living people.

Those orphaned children slowly starving to death, and out rich giving a few dollars of their surplus. It is a mockery.

There were moments when I had to run away from the misery and suffering. How I wished I had plenty of money to at least help them a little. I returned to Warsaw without a single penny in my pockets.

Enough for this time. Our people must help. The help must be prompt, it must be generous, it must be continuous, or we shall have on our consciences the death, horrible deaths,-- it would be more merciful to kill them—of thousand upon thousands of people, **THE GREATEST NUMBER OF WHOM ARE JEWS.**

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