

P O L I S H R E P O R T .

to

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

Thanksgiving Night.
En route for Paris.

Dear Friends,

It was the thankfullest moment of the thankfullest Thanksgiving day of my life when I boarded this train, for now I know it is possible to make good on what I came out here to do and yet get home for Christmas, as I just cannot fail my family again. There will be time too, to get to London if Vincent has not been able to, and to talk things over a bit in France as well and still report to you before the new year opens.

I was detained still another week for Vienna work. The first visit to Prague was very interesting in finding out where cattle feed was available and at what price and through whom one should buy, but I was glad to turn over the actual business to more experienced hands. Then the evening before I was to leave Vienna for Warsaw, came the blow. Both men must go to Jugo-Slavia at once as if done immediately, there was strong chance of getting 50 cars of feed for Vienna, but they dared not go unless someone would take on the cattle feed buying at Prague, for cattle sales begin the next week and we dared not buy cattle without surety of ^{it} they insisted that I must do it for just as British in- ^{is} ^{post} in Hungary, so American is in Czecho-Slovakia ^{do} ^{not} risk a weak link on the pull for that feed. I ^{te} ^{at} link myself but would scarcely refuse even ^{it} ^{to} ^{visit} Germany entirely.

All of you all of that second Prague trip-- is one of those things that are very thrilling to look back on. Practice in France of getting the French to "do the impossible" as they call it, was a valuable apprenticeship and with the aid of an interpreter and a sympathetic secretary at the Food Ministry and a French girl at the Chamber of Commerce, I got the government permit to buy even for hated Vienna, and speeded up the red tape in the Chamber of Commerce to take both that and the Export licence out with me on the 4th day of the session, turned over the whole business on the 5th day in Vienna to the business firm who would handle the details for the City Council and us, and went on my way to Warsaw intensely relieved in my mind.

Now as to Poland: words fail one utterly when I try to picture to you the chaos and suffering in this country: little children in the last stages of starvation, families eating a few cold raw potatoes in a cold hut, an orphan's home where not a child had known the taste of bread for the last month: all this too, in one of the better districts of Poland at Zawiercie near the southern border.

Curiously enough, there has not been the long stretch of gradual deterioration as in Vienna, but this winter the situation is acute because of lack of transportation and the further clog of unseasonably early snow, and potatoes still in the ground thanks to earlier agrarian strikes.

Our people have ^{done} ~~been~~ a most excellent piece of work in their typhus fight for the three months as originally scheduled, but just now are in a transition period--a mobile unit going on with similar work in a ring of villages nearby which are very much

used as typhus breeding ground in the epidemic season.

Some of the rest of the unit are feeling that it is futile to save them from typhus only to starve and freeze to death and there is strong movement to get at such relief work here and perhaps in the more needy districts near Semberg. Part of the unit is now up there scouting.

This change of work is called for by circumstances that were not foreseen earlier and will require the opening of a Warsaw centre to keep in touch with the work of other relief units, movements of personnel and supplies etc.

More than all else, is needed the aid to the country in organizing distribution for they have food enough for several months if they can just get it placed. One cannot count on people themselves to get things through as in Austria or even in any of these other countries because for 150 years all important work has been done by German, Austrian or Russian officials with never a chance for the Poles and now they must learn from the ground up. That long apprenticeship of having to smuggle, steal and cheat to live at all is a terrific handicap and only their courage and hope and national joy at a chance to come back as a nation, has kept them from being utterly swallowed up by the Germans and the Jew now. While to us, it seems chaotic and hopelessly muddled, I marvel it is not worse.

The American Relief Association has a strong supply of food for them flowing in and clothing is coming too. The Red Cross are doing on clothing and medical supplies. The Y.W.C.A. is doing social work for women as to housing, employment, etc and valuable aid in visiting every home in Warsaw and organizing clothing distribution for the A.R.A.

I was lucky enough to stay after my return to Warsaw from the front with a very charming Polish family, owners of textile mill in Warsaw and through the eyes of these people and of former Polish members of our unit now in ordinary civilian life and of American and English heads of other relief units there, I have a very different feeling about the Polish situation from what I had expected.

I feel that any relief supplies we can get in of food, clothing and medical supplies, will be invaluable, but that the most valuable aid of all, will be personnel of judgment and experience enough to assist in the organization of transport and distribution.

It means a real reconstruction and later Quaker embassy business of vital importance for unlike these other countries the government must build from the ground up with a poor start.

We will talk over all this when I get home and you of course, have reports of the German needs and plans from our people already returned so although I am much disappointed not to return that way, the feeling is more personal than otherwise.

I shall return by the Lafayette unless there is a boat the next week which would give me a chance to report in person to the London Committee and still get home with January free to do publicity work for the home committee if you want that.

I must get to work again February 1st at my old job unless that can be arranged for my return to work here. I long to be twins so I can do both, but that must wait till I arrive.

I am looking forward with great excitement to getting back and knowing America a bit and getting acquainted with my family and the splendid Philadelphia backing that I have all too little personal acquaintance with.

Yours Sincerely,