

HORSES FOR HUMANITY



Edited By
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HORSES

FOR

HUMANITY

A Report on a Mission to Poland

by

Eleven Ministers

Jack Fasset	W. L. Hawn	F. D. McClellan
Wesley Miller	Eldon Rannige	Oscar E. Stern
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S. S. MT. WHITNEY CATTLEMEN — (names listed at back of book)

PREFACE

This is a report on a mission to Poland undertaken by 80 cattlemen at the behest of Church World Service and UNRRA in January and February, 1947. Most of us arrived in Newport News, Virginia, on or before Wednesday, January 8, expecting to be on our way and home again in six weeks. How our plans were completely upset will be discovered in the reading.

The idea of writing and publishing this report was conceived while we waited in Karlskrona, Sweden for the Baltic ice to yield to our belated passage. Each of the eleven ministers on board agreed to write on one phase of our experience and the writer was assigned the task of editing and correlating the various essays into a continuous whole. The names of the individual authors are omitted from the text but is well to state here that the sections on life on shipboard "Eastward Ho" and several paragraphs of "The Long Way Home," were prepared by the Rev. Melvin C. Witmer of Fountain City, Wisconsin; "Ruins" by the Rev. Frank Swanson of Falmouth, Kentucky; "People" by the Rev. Eldon Rannige now of White Plains, New York "Their Daily Bread by the Rev. Woodrow Hawn of Shelby, Iowa; "Relief" by the Rev. Wilbert W. Zahl of Spring Valley, Minn.; "Government" by the Rev. Wesley Miller, Racine, Minn.; "Religion" by the Rev. Jack Fasset, Milesburg, Pa.; "A Concentration Camp" by the Rev. Oscar Stern, Guthrie, Minn.; "A Trip to Warsaw" by the Rev. Lorin J. Wolf, Bloomfield, Nebraska, and the Rev. F. D. McClellan, Burton, Nebraska; the introductory paragraphs and "The Long Way Home" by the editor.

That this report is a year late in its publishing is a fact of genuine regret. But the reason for the long delay is an even greater cause for sorrow. Stanley K. Iverson, publisher of the "Enterprise and News," the weekly newspaper of the village of St. Johnsville, New York, and a close friend of the writer's, was a victim of a terrible explosion which completely wrecked his shop and after cruel hours of pain, killed him. That we were able to find the manuscript of this report and at long last put it back together again to publish it in this form is a miracle for which we thank his wife, Mrs. Stanley K. Iverson, who is carrying on in his stead.

REPORT ON A MISSION
EASTWARD HO!

Yet, despite the long delay and its tragic cause it can be safely said that this report will ring the bells of adventurous memory in all our hearts and become a cherished reminder of three months of fellowship over which we knew the protecting hand of God.

Norman Edwin Thomas

Bellevue Reformed Church
Schenectady, New York
June 25, 1948

Though we did not know his name he was for a few moments of a midnight hour, a friend who held in his hands the magic power to set us free. He stood in the darkness of the pier, a small figure, far below us who watched from the ship's deck. He stooped, raised the hawser from its hold, let it fall limply into the sea, and slowly, as it was pulled upwards, serpent-like, by the forward winch, slowly, as the tug's engines pounded, the black gap of watery space between us widened. It was just past 12 o'clock Saturday, January 25, 1947. The S. S. Whitney, with a cargo of 1460 horses, a matched pair of purebreds, 40 heifers, and numerous cartons of clothes and food, was on its way to Poland.

We who write this are eleven ministers of 7 denominations and 8 states who formed part of the complement of 80 'cattlemen' who were recruited by the Brethern Service Committee on behalf of UNRRA to care for the livestock. Most of the cattlemen were farmers who, like the ministers, had taken leave of their work ostensibly for a 6 weeks period, to do their part in this program of helpfulness and good will. Most of us had been called on January 6th and had journeyed speedily to Newport News, Va., some from as far off as Minnesota and Nebraska, only to be forced to wait restlessly for 16 days, delayed by a shortage of hay, before the eventful day should come.

And now, shivering in the cold night air, we watched Pier X become two red dots of distant light. We heard the tug's whistle sound its farewell. On our own, entirely free, we turned into the Hampton Roads channel and quickly gathered speed. The lights of Norfolk and Newport News fast receded. Ahead, to the eastward, a lone solitary beacon reminded us that the night was dark. We went below content to sleep for at last we were on our way.

"Out of those sacks" was our rude introduction to life on shipboard at 6:30 the next morning. Once roused, each of us went to his assigned hold, one of six, with from two to four decks in each, including the temporary stalls built on the top or 'weather' deck. In most of the holds and on the weather deck also, the horses were in double rows of stalls, facing each other over the narrow passage-way which served as both feeding alley and manger. Some of the larger horses extended half way across the alley so that one had to be detouring constantly around their heads as they snapped and coughed and snorted as one went by. Before the journey was over many of the men were nursing horse-bites.

Morning chores began with the feeding of oats and sometimes salt, after which in the larger hold-decks (which held almost one hundred horses) two men went for breakfast while the remaining two started to water and to feed hay, always in such abundance that piles four feet high were standard. Within an hour or so after all had breakfasted, the main chores were done.

Then would come the time for hay-pulling by block and tackle from the great piles of bales stored in the bottom holds. All men of the hold worked together on this, some tugging the bales, some hooking, some hoisting, others stacking on their respective decks. More hay was fed around noon and usually water, and then in the evening a heavy feeding and water in abundance marked the close of an average day. We were through at 8 o'clock, for then the night watchmen took over. Soon on our way, however, extra chores were added. Some of the horses became sick and persisted in lying down. We were charged to keep them standing at all cost, but failing we called in our foreman and our 'vet' and often helped him to administer medicine. We usually set up a hospital stall which necessitated moving the horses around. Tailing in all that, we helped in the somewhat gruesome task of dragging the dead horses to the open hatch, and then watched as they were hoisted by the neck and dropped overboard by means of a power boom and winch. Further complications arose when large numbers of the men succumbed to sea sickness, often requiring a doubling up of work.

The first six days on the Atlantic were wonderfully smooth, sunny, and warm, but on the seventh day we ran headlong into a fierce gale which struck with such great violence that for three days it tossed our great ship about like a cork. Anchored in the harbor at Newport News the Mt. Whitney looked immense. It is one of the largest cargo vessels ever built. When fully loaded it displaces 22,500 tons and it carries a powerful engine of 9500 horse power. Nevertheless, engulfed in mountainous fifty foot waves which seemed to strike from all directions at the same time we were able to make but little headway and for one whole day, 24 hours, we made absolutely no mileage at all. The wind and the waves battered the forward stalls to pieces. Trying to save the horses three of the men were almost swept overboard. One's wristwatch was torn off and his leg gashed. Captain Shigley tried his best to spare the horses as much punishment as possible. We heard later that he did not sleep at all during those three days. Nevertheless, the terrific strain caused many of the weaker horses to fall from exhaustion. At the end of the trip our total loss was 89, almost the equivalent of an entire hold deck.

As the storm abated we began to make up for lost time. We made rapid headway through the Pentland Firth, the North Scotland entrance into the North Sea. Our next landfall was the coast of Norway, sunny brown hills over blue water. At the Skaw, a narrow neck of Denmark that separates the Skagerrak from the Kattegat we picked up our Danish pilot, impressively dressed in a dark brass-buttoned great coat and a tall fur hat. It was in the latter that we first encountered the relentless impediment which was to hold us prisoner for so long. We who worked in the holds down below began to hear the ominous sound of heavy ice stubbornly disrupting our passage. Ice became heavier as we went south until we reached Malmo, Sweden where we were forced to join a convoy led by an ice breaker which led us through to the Baltic. The Baltic itself was clear but the ice was thick enough off Gdynia to force us to go on to Nowyport, where we docked Thursday evening, February 7.

At 4:50 at dawn on September 1st, 1939 the first German bombs fell on the Polish Air Force Station at Puck, killing an officer, the first casualty of the war. It was from there that German bombers spread quickly over Poland and within a few hours thirty cities were in flames. Thus began the methodical destruction of the houses, hospitals, churches, and schools, along with military objectives, of the peace loving people of the land.

Our ship docked at Nowyport, Poland, Thursday afternoon, February 7, 1947 only a few miles south-east of the Air Base at Puck. It was at Nowyport, as we were tugged into the docking canal, even as we stood cold but excitedly eager in our good ship's bow, that we first saw for ourselves how ruthless war's destruction had been.

Among the first and most impressive sights was the shell-torn tower of the large Lutheran church, a beautiful building that had for many years reminded the people of the presence of God in their midst, and was an invitation to the people to meet together to worship God. Now destruction had come.

The cranes, warehouse, and other equipment for the unloading of ships had also been severely damaged. Railroad stations were without heat and the passenger cars had little. Trolley cars were operated on fairly good schedules but also had little or no heat.

As we walked the streets of this small port city, we saw but few buildings of any kind that did not bear the scars of war. Many of the buildings had been completely destroyed, others partially. When one beheld the many deserted ruins that had once been homes, one was led to wonder where the people had gone. We were told that some had been sent to prisons and concentration camps. Others had simply disappeared, but all had suffered.

It was in the old city of Danzig that we really saw how terribly wide-spread destruction could be. This once proud city, which boasted a large pre-war population now lies in ruins. In many of the streets where once thronged crowds of happy people and all sorts of vehicles, piles of rubble stand grim and silent in the way.

As we stood in front of what remained of a large public museum, the front wall of which bore the date 1605,

we were reminded that this building had been erected two years before the first permanent settlement of our English colony at Jamestown, Va. Here in the museum had been housed the priceless treasures of the past, treasures that bore witness to the long, hard struggle of progress. Now only shell-torn and fire-gutted walls stood, a mute reminder that what had taken centuries to accumulate could be destroyed by the fury of war in a few days.

With so much destruction about us we wondered where the surviving inhabitants were living. As we walked through the snow-covered streets we could see many paths leading from the streets through the ruins of ancient buildings to sheltering basement rooms, now the only places available for the people to live in.

To stand in the heart of the city, which once had been a busy intersection, and to see in all directions nothing but the ruins of costly buildings we wondered why so many non-military objectives should be thus destroyed. We were told that the greatest destruction came in the early part of 1945 when the Russians drove the Germans out and systematically burned the city. Revenge for Stalingrad.

On Sunday, February 16th, we saw in the ruins of one of the partly destroyed buildings, on a main street in Danzig, the still clothed skeleton of a man whose life had been lost during those tragic days. Thus were we forcefully reminded that though the loss of property had been great, the loss of life had been much greater. Destroyed buildings can be rebuilt but not destroyed lives.

PEOPLE

If ordinary circumstances tend to produce ordinary people and unusual circumstances tend to produce unusual people, then the folks in this area should be unique. What an experience this portion of humanity has undergone, as mingling with them and calling on family after family has so vividly emphasized.

Their eyes have now grown accustomed to seeing the most glaring contrast between what was and now is. Gdansk, the former free city of Danzig with German speaking people, was once one of the very beautiful cities of Europe. Today, most of it suggests a completely devastated melancholy spectacle. Where once was a great area of a thriving business, today no business establishments can be found. Many people who formerly lived in spacious stone houses in the beautiful suburbs, now see their home only as a forlorn little patched-up room in the basement of a bomb-wrecked brick structure. As a mother of five children living in one room said, "Alles war schon, yetz ist alles Kaput." (Everything was beautiful, now everything is done for.) Her husband was still a prisoner in Russia.

Every home and nearly every individual knows the tragedy of the war from first-hand experience. Not only have the majority of families lost their possessions and keepsakes but one or more members suffered cruelly. Strike up a random conversation with almost anyone in bus or train or on street corner, and as likely as not you find yourself talking to a person who had been in a concentration camp or transported to Siberia or wounded in a fray. We spoke no Polish and few spoke English, so most of our contact was in German which all could understand. A few of us were sitting in a cold compartment of a train one day beside a well dressed man who appeared unusually vigorous. On learning that he had been in Warsaw all through the terrible events there, we said to him that he was surely fortunate to have come out of it all with so little bad effects. "Oh Ya" he answered, and opening up his coat and shirt he showed us a ghastly scar made by the sword of a Nazi.

The mothers and daughters suffered as badly as the men. A large percentage of them were raped by the Russians. The Russians used the then Germanized city of

Danzig for a vengeance spot against the atrocities the Germans had inflicted upon their people. And they surely wrecked havoc with a vengeance. Mothers told of hiding their daughters in dresser drawers, in rolled up rugs, in rafters on the roof and in church belltows, sometimes for weeks at a time. One mother told of being raped thirty times in less than a week.

In the light of such experiences as these what has it done to the people? It is only easy to generalize but after thinking of the different persons we talked to and the homes we visited - often staying to a simple meal with them - two definite impressions concerning these tragic victims of war stand out in our minds. One is the atmosphere of fear and uneasiness; the other is a determination to carry on. That there is a spirit of anxiety is only natural, not only because of their past war experiences and underground activity, but even more so because of their present economic and political insecurity. A people who have been trained for years in underground activity and terrorism can not all at once be expected to feel free and open. More than once when we took a relief package to a home of an evening, they strongly advised us with an urgency that plainly indicated their uneasiness, not to venture out alone on the streets at night.

When a common laborer must work a whole month to earn enough zlotys to buy a pair of shoes and when they are not sure of any abiding value of their currency, it is easy to see why they feel economically insecure. Though the bank would exchange less than two hundred zlotys for the American dollar, in the poorest of homes they would offer you seven hundred or more. We asked one poor widow why she was so anxious to get our American dollar and she replied, "Ist ist immer gut, aber zloty, wer weis?" (It is always good but the zloty, who knows?)

Another source of great fear (whether for good or poor reasons) is the power of Russia. The city of Gdansk suffered more from the Russian than it did from the Nazi. They are extremely suspicious of the Russian plan for their country. Voices find it easy to drop down to a whisper when speaking of Russia. Their tense uneasiness is all the more noticeable when one contrasts the atmosphere in Sweden where we stopped later. Sweden is as close to Russia as is Poland but as one minister

there remarked, "we have been neighbors to Russia for a long time and have never had any trouble." Whether taking a relief package to a bombed out family or, whether stopping all night at the Grand Hotel in Soppot, Poland, we were strongly conscious of an atmosphere of marked unnatural restraint.

The other outstanding impression of these people was their determination to carry on. Day after day workers were helping to clear out the bricks of bombed buildings for a few paltry zlotys that hardly kept them above semi-starvation. Mothers of families in basement one-room homes went about trying to keep their children in food and clothes and to send them to school. A large percentage of the youth of high school age do not have a bed to sleep on at night, sleeping on the floor with a coat for a cover, but they are in school. One mother told us that she had a pretty good job and she was going to try and save enough money to come to America some day where she prayed it might be better for her children.

A protestant minister and his wife in Gdynia personified this spirit for us in a way that will not be easy to forget. Rev. Gamble, who had been in a concentration camp where he was starved and permanently weakened, and was now over seventy years of age, was offered a chance to leave for England for a much needed rest. As we sat in his little one-room home, the walls filled with bullet holes, he told us that he could not now accept this offer and leave his needy people who were trying so desperately to carry on. His courageous little wife who had seen better days and a much finer home was standing by him and had no other thought but to assist her husband in the work with these needy people. She told us how she had been fearful of losing her mind when they were living near Pzmysl during the Jewish persecution. Every night for months there would be a rap at their door and a Jewish fugitive with terror in his eyes would plead with them to take him and hide him. They could do nothing else but refuse as their home was often searched during the day. Their refusal more often than not meant that later in the still hours of the night they would hear an agonized cry of a terrorized victim. It was only by the grace of God that she was kept sane, so she explained to us as she served us coffee and Polish cakes. Even in devastated hopeless Gdansk, there is evidence of that spirit within man that can not be broken.

Poland is a land of mental, physical, and economic prostration. We have given some indication of the first and second but the third is more difficult to discuss because of inadequate data and because of the complex intermingling of Government and Industry and Agriculture.

The perennial problem of Poland has always been land. Prior to 1939, one fifth of all the land was held by the nobility in estates of 450 acres or more. In that year 81.5% of the land was divided into farms of 125 acres, or less, 15% in larger farms, and 3.5% government owned. Since the victorious march of Russia into Poland the last percentage has increased greatly. The government has tried to peg the prices of farm products, both wholesale and retail. The peasant has raised less food and the government has been forced to take over more land.

For the pocketbook of the common man, dairy prices are fearfully high. Eggs cost 300% a dozen; butter 350 a pound, more than a common man's daily wage. Very few hens are left and fewer cows, less than 6000 in the greater Danzig area as compared to the 600,000 head before the war. It is not hard to understand the plight of the Polish people when one considers that they have been over-run not by one but by two conquering armies. First, the Germans stripped the country of its young men and many of its young women; all of its produce, and coal, and all the machinery they could use, leaving only the machinery they could make use of in Poland. Yet, though she stripped Poland, Germany nevertheless left her with a government, her coal mines intact, and, for those who escaped the concentration camps, a chance to live a fairly normal life.

Then came the Russians. They took back to Russia whatever machinery the Germans had overlooked and depleted every type of industry and business until today all that Poland has left is her coal. Under the present government much even of that has been robbed from the people by a trade agreement that virtually gives Russia 33,000 tons of coal a day in exchange for "Russian" grain that is actually grown in Poland. 100,000 tons of coal was delivered to UNRRA in one year, of which 75,000 tons went to Bulgaria and 25,000 to Austria.

Business in Poland is finding it difficult to survive as private enterprise because the government is also in business and can buy glass, iron, and steel at half the price which private industrialists must pay. It is probable that all business will eventually be controlled by the government.

The serious plight of the Polish people is most evident in the relationship of wages and prices. It is said that 25,000 zlotys a month are needed to live 'comfortably'. But common laborers make only 200 to 250z a day. Women are paid 100 to 150z a day. In addition to the dairy prices already cited they must pay 350z for one kilogram of meat, 510 for sausage, 2800 for coffee, 4200 for cocoa. A small orange cost 80z. The laborer therefore has to subsist on the tasty but coarse brown bread which cost 40z for 1 kilo. Rent is low at 350z a month for 3-5 rooms, but coal is high at 400z for 100 pounds. To keep body and soul together, the people are forced to further means of livelihood.

The middle class of yesterday, what remains from the systematic German liquidation, is fast disappearing, by selling its jewelry, family heirlooms, dishes and clothes at such places as the open market at Gdansk for pitifully small returns.

The poor, having little else, sometimes resort to prostitution. Sometimes men can be found selling their wives, children, mothers or sisters to the traffic. They do this, not because of the lack of moral sense, but out of the fierce driving hand of hunger and cold. Actually, considering the desperate situation in which so many find themselves, the people are markedly self-restrained.

Another possible source of income for many is the black market in American dollars. Where the official exchange rate is 150z for one dollar we received from 500 to 800z in exchange in restaurants, stores and hotels. Even the post office gave 300. Bills of large denominations were worth more. A \$100 bill would bring 120 in dollar bills. If one had a \$20 gold piece it would bring \$200. This black market exists because the people have little faith in their own money which has been greatly inflated, and pegged to the Russian ruble; and also because the few who are able to leave Poland find American money easier to use. The large bills, \$100 and \$1000 etc., are in demand

because refugees are subject to search and one \$100 bill is easier to hide than 100 dollar bills.

The next important black market item is penicillin. Every American ship is a possible source of supply in this traffic.

Cigarettes are next on the list and find ready sale at from 1000 to 1800z a carton to sell for 2400 retail.

When it takes 25,000z a month to live comfortably and the combined income of father and mother is only 9,000z, it is evident why the black market flourishes. The highest and the lowest participate in it alike. The people must live. Black market, prostitution, no matter what the sacrifice, life must go on.

Yet, underneath it all a new Poland is being forged. Who will help? The people wait and suffer.

RELIEF

In view of these economic factors we ministers and cattlemen were grateful that an opportunity to help had been offered us. The great cargo of horses which we brought was a small portion to fill a great need, for less than 1 million of Poland's 3 million horses remain. Poland's livestock, especially the better breeds, was similarly depleted. Due to a change of boundaries, many people were shifted to new localities where there was nothing to get started with except the former German owner's looted farm and partially destroyed buildings. The need for medical supplies is especially acute since many people suffer from malnutrition. During the war medical supplies gave out and many doctors never returned from the battle fronts. In addition to these immediate needs, there is a call for trained men in animal husbandry, modern trends in farming, and factory technicians.

The greatest effort to meet these needs has come from UNRRA. To date (Feb. 1947) some 240,000 horses have been shipped, considerable farm equipment, food, and clothing. Our 1371 horses were transported from Nowyport to East Central Poland for distribution by the government. The estimated price which the farmers will pay for them is a little over half of the regular market value. Included in the shipment of horses was a pair of registered Belgians, given by an American college to the University of Warsaw. The 40 heifers which we carried were donated by the Methodist Church and were received by Mr. Metzger of the Brethren Service office in Warsaw who had made arrangements for their free distribution to Methodist families at Elk, East Prussia. It was of interest to learn from Mr. Metzger that he is endeavoring to set up a modern farm in connection with the college at Warsaw where farm boys will be able to receive up-to-date instruction in animal husbandry and agricultural methods. He stressed the need for volunteers who are trained graduates of a United States Agricultural college, as well as donations of farm equipment such as electric incubators, milkers, etc. Any one interested is urged to contact the Brethren Service Center at New Windsor, Md. Several of the men also met at Sopot, a

city near Gdansk, the American Red Cross representative who took them on a tour of the countryside. From him it was learned that two complete hospital units had just arrived and by now are set up in central Poland.

In addition to our cargo of horses and cattle, some of the men brought along from their churches and homes such relief items as clothing, canned milk, cereals, dehydrated fruit and vegetables, soap, candy, etc. for personal distribution. Because of the severe cold weather and lack of suitable transportation, most of the larger items were left with a trusted customs official who in turn gave them to the neediest families. All of us received a great deal of pleasure in the distribution of candy and gum to the children who thronged the streets.

All these efforts to alleviate the needs of this stricken land are greatly appreciated by the Polish people and should be continued for some time to come. It is estimated that 100,000 more horses are needed immediately if all crop acreage is to be worked this year. Tractors are almost non-existent. Other needs continue with the same degree of urgency. It should be pointed out, however, that there are difficulties in providing this aid.

Accusations that much of it, especially the horses and machinery, filter through to Russia cannot definitely be substantiated. However, it is evident that preference is given to those who belong to the P. P. R. which is the Russian dominated party now in power. Donated livestock delivered through the Brethren Service is distributed by them and is entirely free from government interference.

Food and clothing are likewise open to questionable distribution at times. Customs officials, through whom all items must clear before they can be taken to needy families have been accused of keeping some back for themselves or for sale in the black market. We feel assured, however, that the many articles we brought were actually delivered to homes where there was real need. In some cases, letters have already been received in the States when the donor's address has been attached to the gift.

Churches and individuals who wish to share in this urgent effort can make sure that their contribution will reach those in greatest need if they will send directly to individual families, to church agencies in Poland, or to Brethren Service.

THE GOVERNMENT

Truth is a rare commodity at any time but it is especially difficult to get at in the chaotic Polish political situation. Even as war has left its confusion and loss in the physical wreckage of Poland, so that same war has left an equally terrible confusion in affairs of state. Poland, without real independent self-government for almost eight years, has suffered near ruin as a political unit just as surely as its buildings have been blown to bits. During much of the war, the legal government was far away in London, forced to flee from the homeland before the German army's conquering might. The Germans tried systematically, scientifically, to exterminate the Polish intelligentsia. Most of the political, cultural, and economic leaders--those of course who refused to bow the knee, - were either destroyed, imprisoned in concentration camps, which often meant eventual death, or uprooted and sent to other parts of Europe, usually as slave labor. Those who survived the Germans faced a new threat when the Russians came. People were driven from their homes by invading armies, by bombs or by fire. Many fled as political refugees, others were taken as political prisoners, until today a Polish family is considered very fortunate if it lives within the same walls which were called 'home' before the war.

The political confusion that prevails in Poland is realized most acutely when the visitor asks questions of the people. For example, inquiry about the destruction of Danzig will bring at least three answers. One will say that the Germans shelled and destroyed Danzig when they knew it was lost to them. Another will insist that the Russians looted, then blew up and systematically destroyed the city, while still others declare that the British and Americans dropped the bombs of destruction. Each account has some truth, but only part of it. The prejudice of the particular individual will usually determine which of the three answers he will give. These prejudices and bitter hatreds are not soon forgotten. A people so deeply torn asunder is not easily re-united into a nation.

Out of the emotional stress of rebuilding it is almost impossible for any visitor to present a clear picture of the political situation. The official picture glows with

optimism and affection for Poland's Russian brothers but the viewpoint of the 'man in the street' is quite different. We write therefore not conclusively but experimentally, of what we have ourselves seen and heard. Our first unofficial picture will reflect how the people feel and live under the present government and will afford a glimpse into the hopes and expectations of a people emerging from the shock and rubble of war. This picture can perhaps be best drawn within the dimensions of four words.

The first of these is Expediency. When William L. White in his "Report On The Poles" wrote before the January elections that Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, leader of the Polish Peasants' Party and Vice Premier of the coalition government established in June 1945, was by far the most popular and the strongest man in Poland, he estimated that the Peasants' Party (P. P. S.) would carry up to 85% of the votes in a free election. Yet when the elections finally came, after repeated postponements by the pro-Soviet bloc, communist Boleslaw Bierut was overwhelmingly elected president. The reason? Simply that the people had little or no choice. It was expedient for them to vote the No. 3 ticket for the Polish Workers' Party. Many, especially in the military forces, were given ballots already marked and sealed in envelopes. Others were given only the No. 3 party ballot. It was a threat to security and to life itself to oppose the communist party. Hence it may be said that expediency won the election.

But threat of death, imprisonment or deportation is not the only explanation of the P. P. R. victory. People had learned that there was no food ration, work, property rights or relief goods for those who voted the 'wrong' way. It was made quite clear to us that UNRRA horses, cattle, tractors, etc. went for the most part to assured party members. In a land where there is not enough to go around it is expedient to do the thing, even if you believe it wrong, which will bring you bread.

The second word in this four-dimensional picture is Fear. Poland is a land of police officers and guns. When one of our number snapped a picture of a train in a depot, unknowingly breaking the law, he was arrested by a soldier in a blue uniform who carried a sub-machine gun

slung over his shoulder. And these guns are in the hands of men much accustomed to using them. We could not lightly dismiss reports of police visits to homes at night and the total disappearance of the arrested occupant by morning after we saw a man and wife look at each other in silent fear when a strange sound was heard outside their home. Following a group interview we were begged never to publish the names of the speakers. In America we would hardly cringe for cover as we saw people in Poland shrink into the shelter of a corner at the sound of an unexpected knock on the door. People sometimes speak in guarded whispers even in their homes. Poland is a land of widespread fear.

A third word very evident in Polish policy today is Suspicion. We learned in conversations with people how little they trusted even their neighbors lest they be spies or informers. Because of the intermixing of peoples from all parts of the nation, especially from what was formerly the eastern part of Poland, people find strangers all about them and have lost the sense of 'neighborhood'. Those who have always called Danzig their home are sometimes scornful and suspicious of the newcomers. They do not hesitate to accuse them of theft, pilfering of ruins, black-market operations and all around shiftlessness.

There is suspicion even within government agencies. It was a matter of interest to us that our ship was under guard of at least three sets of officials. One American representative described it thus: before anything can be handled a commission of five men had to be appointed to count or check the goods (Red Cross materials for example), then another similar commission of five was appointed to check the report of the first and so on at each handling.

The fourth and final word, paradoxically, is Hope. It is a hope that strongly finds its base in the hopelessness of war. Many of the people seem to dislike the present government so much that they are looking to the United States to defeat Russia in a war which one official said was 'inevitable' and restore thereby the freedom of the Polish people. One man, a clerk who had spent six years in Siberian exile, opined that America had made a terrible blunder in sending Russia further assistance after the battle of Stalingrad. He said that

without our help the war between Germany and Russia would have ended in a mutual state of national exhaustion. America, then, not Russia, would have freed Poland. But, as evidenced by the universal spirit of friendliness and good will toward us America remains the hope of Poland. As one Polish university student put it "The American atomic bomb is the great optimism of the Polish people." From a more personal viewpoint it is of great interest to see how many, shoemakers, clerks, housewives, all look to America as their promised land and hope to get there some day. That hope is at least one of the reasons why the American dollar has such high value.

What is actually happening within the inner recesses of the Polish government is hard to discover. Publications put out by the government itself present a much brighter picture than the one we have attempted to define. Even the casual observer can readily see the complex difficulty of many of the problems which beset President Beirut and his cohorts.

As we have already pointed out, one of the areas in which real progress has been made is in land-reform which with its direct political implications has had a long history. Struggle against the great landed estates which held the peasants in virtual slavery began as early as 1806 and began to win some victories in 1863-1864. These efforts were resumed after the World war when Poland regained her freedom. An act became effective in 1925 which ordered the gradual breaking up of all holdings larger than 450 acres. The present government has confiscated all estates of 125 acres or more and the owners forced to move to other districts. This policy has several objectives: First, there is an effort to reduce the rural population by encouraging rural folk to move westward to the new part of Poland between the Oder and the Niesse Rivers which formerly was a key industrial part of Germany. The people who make this 'emigration' will thus exchange their agricultural way of life for a new urban factory-centered existence. A second objective is found in the government's aim to make a 12 acre farm the minimum size. Many of the larger estates are being divided into these units and granted to landless peasants. The third objective reaches toward the government or collective farm. About 10% of all con-

fiscated land is held for this purpose. While the outcome of this movement is still an open question, the stated purpose is one of experimental agricultural methods in improved farming.

The government of Poland faces another extremely difficult task in the matter of property rights. With six million Poles dead, 17% of the population, and millions more displaced, much of the property is without ownership. A good part of this has become government property in one form or another. In the cities those dwellings which are still usable are rented to homeless people, usually refugees from the east. A list of all furniture and other items that belong to the house or apartment is posted at the entrance door. The ban against buying 'new' furniture has only recently been lifted. Ruins are sold to contractors who salvage the bricks and steel, sometimes for black market operations. Outside the Grand Hotel in Sopot where many of us stayed we saw hundreds of men and women engaged in this arduous task. We were told that many of these were refugees who received only bread and shelter in payment for their labor.

For the present all rebuilding initiative must come from the government, for there is little private capital left. What the future of such government control will be is a matter of speculation. Apparently some who have fled from Poland for political reasons are reluctant to return and rebuild under the present regime, hugged so affectionately as it is by the Russian bear. With the economy, and the army, as well as the government, already in his encircling grasp, the question is whether he will be content with this or growl for more.

RELIGION

One of the very important factors that will have much to do with Poland's future is the matter of religion. The Polish people have always been a religious people and today even amid the wreckage of society one still finds a strong religious undercurrent. Before the war 64% of the population was Roman Catholic and the remaining 36% Orthodox, Polish National Catholic, and Protestant. At present Roman Catholics number 96%, while Protestantism has declined from 750,000 to 250,000. We talked to a Baptist who had come from Estonia who pointed out several members of the Baptist congregation at Gdansk as peasants who had come from eastern Poland and Russia to make a living, strangely enough, in the ruins of Gdansk. This congregation seems to be well organized and is housed in a building of far better condition than is average for the city. They have a full time pastor and were contributing to the support of 30 children in a Baptist orphanage near by. Their worship services were simple and their singing, though unaccompanied by any musical instrument, was beautiful.

Many of the members of this congregation have disappeared. Much of the German Protestant population has been deported and the church properties turned over to a government bureau for re-distribution in remaining Roman Catholic congregations which are able to meet the cost of rebuilding.

Some of these churches such as the huge Marienkirche and the church of St. Peter and St. Paul were originally Roman Catholic, but became Protestant during the spiritual fervor of the Reformation. Now, above the great stone outside the latter in which is carved the history of the church, there is a poster which reads that "at last the church of St. Peter and St. Paul has returned to the 'Catholic' church to which it belonged."

In the rural areas of Poland the church plays a much greater part in community life than before as it is both the distribution center for relief and also the headquarters for the relocation of D. P.'s. However, in a talk with a Ukrainian Baptist missionary we learned that many

of the Protestant congregations in the eastern section of Poland are in dire poverty. Their condition is all the more serious because as a rule their convictions prevent them from joining the P. P. R. They are thus deprived of government sponsored relief. They are trying to take care of themselves by sharing what little they do possess. Through all their privations they have maintained a high level of faith and have established a favorable climate of opinion in the minds of those who know them. In many households husband and wife shared the same overcoat during the bitter winter months, one remained indoors while the other was out. Many eat but one meal a day and that repast consists solely of potatoes. We have yet to learn what the outcome of this Christian witness will be.

According to Catholic leaders there is no connection between the church and the present government. If anything there is a little pressure on the church from the Communist faction. Church property, other than worship edifices and schools, including many of the extensive land holdings formerly under the control of the Polish Hierarchy, has been confiscated in the Land Reform Program.

Outstanding among the leaders we met were the before mentioned Reverend and Mrs. Gamble who together conducted a Sunday morning Methodist service held at the Swedish Sailors' Mission at Gdynia. Mr. Gamble, born in New Brunswick, Canada, came to Poland twenty-nine years ago as a Y. M. C. A. relief worker and has stayed there ever since. We visited him in his one room apartment, scarred with hundreds of bullet holes in the ceiling and walls. His pleasant Polish wife and interpreter insisted on serving us tea and delicious apple cake but the story they told overshadowed even that. They were in the midst of the Polish-Bolshevik war in 1920 with a portable Y. M. C. A. soup kitchen. Threatened by the Bolsheviks they loaded their wagon by night and retreated to Lwow where they were soon serving 800 meals a day to students. A few years later during the terrible Russian famine they fed thousands of refugees, most of them living skeletons when they arrived. Mr. and Mrs. Gamble opened an orphanage at Przemysl in east Poland and a chapel as well which

they maintained until 1939 when Przemysl became a border line city between Russia and Germany. They were moved 17 kilometers into Russia but received tacit permission to continue preaching at the chapel to which they walked every Sunday morning unmolested.

They continued thus for a long while even after the Germans came. Puppet officials were appointed from amongst the people who outdid the Nazis in their persecution of the Jews. The Gambles lived across the road from the jail. Their nights became an agony and sleep a horror, shattered as it was again and again by the screams of the dying.

They were finally imprisoned themselves in October, 1943, were sent to several concentration camps, were liberated a year later and sent to a D. P. camp in France. Mr. Gamble refused repatriation. He preached at the camp until opportunity came to return to Poland and now, seventy-five years old he carries on, helped by his loyal, loving wife.

Thus has the spirit of Polish Protestantism been tempered in the crucible of tribulation. As they look to the uncertainties of tomorrow their faith seems to be best expressed in the text of the sermon we heard on the Sunday morning we were there: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

A CONCENTRATION CAMP

On February 13, forty of us, ship's officers, vets, and cattlemen set out on what proved to be the highlight of all our experiences in Poland. On that biting cold day we boarded trucks at Nowyport bound for Studthof, the notorious concentration camp where 120,000 Poles lost their lives at the hands of the Nazis. Traveling over roads literally strewn with the wreckage of military trucks, tanks, and guns, for a distance of about 30 miles we turned into a brick gateway which looked more like the entrance to a park or a hospital than anything else. But beyond the imposing headquarters which was also built of red brick were the long rows of barracks, barbed wire enclosures, towers from which the grounds were guarded, all silently bearing witness to the horribly cruel persecution and deaths dealt out to many helpless and innocent people who had been imprisoned there.

Our guides were Mr. and Mrs. Frank Krol who had been imprisoned at Studthof for 3 years during which time three of their five children died. As we went about we received from them a somewhat detailed account of what had taken place.

The barracks were large unheated rooms made to house 150 people. The sleeping quarters were the bare floor with one blanket for each person. Toilets were fixed at intervals about a quarter of a city block apart. The barracks were connected by narrow corridors, making enclosed passage to all. The camp was put into operation before all the buildings were completed. The inmates suffered from exposure, wounds from cruel beatings, sickness, and always hunger, until death made its inevitable claim to the extent of 200 lives a day. Those who died within the barracks were buried beneath the floors of the unfinished barracks, where they remain to the present time.

Separate quarters were maintained for men and women. All suffered alike the bitterness of organized torture. Many were forced to dig their own graves and then as they stood beside the trenches they had dug, they were shot down by a firing squad. All that the Nazis had to do was throw dirt over the warm bodies.

A gas chamber, a cement enclosure 9x21 feet was the most effective mass killer. It destroyed as many as 150 lives at a time. The helpless victims were first stripped of their clothing, given a hot shower and then diabolically, were forced into the gas chamber by fellow prisoners who in turn were forced to their dreadful task by the Nazis. The Poles were packed into the gas chamber until there was no room for more. Within 15 minutes after the door was closed and the gas turned on, all those inside were dead.

Nearby were the ovens where the bodies were cremated. Fleshy ones were taken to one of the barracks, the fat carved from them and sent to the soap factory in Gdansk. The remains were disposed of in the ovens. An eloquent monument to the dead still stands on the grounds in the form of a huge pile of shoes in the shape of a squat pyramid, 30 feet square, 15 feet high. The countless thousands of shoes were covered by a blanket of new-fallen snow. As we stood before them it was hard to believe that they once warmed living feet.

The Poles have erected two large wooden crosses, one over the gas chamber, one over the ovens, as memorials to the beloved dead. From time to time they place wreaths beneath them and garlands of flowers, and they observe together a five minute period of silent communion. We and all who have seen carry etched forever in our minds the grim picture of the almost unbelievable crimes of misdirected German soldiers who at the end paid for their deeds with their lives.

A TRIP TO WARSAW

During our thirteen days in Poland another notable journey was made by four of us, two ministers and two fellow cattlemen, one of Polish birth, the other born in America of Polish parentage. We had been advised not to leave the port area of Gdansk but our desire to see Warsaw, the capital city, was greater than our fear of being taken into custody without a visa, so on the very evening of our arrival in Novyport we set out on our way.

The railroad depot at Gdansk presented us with a taste of what was to come; half destroyed intensely cold, filled with patient people who waited endlessly in line to buy tickets. We went outside to the station platform and crowded into a small refreshment stand to get warm. While we were waiting inside we could hear people running back and forth past the stand, trying to keep warm. As we waited for the train which proved to be two hours late we bought dark bread and Polish sausage and while we were eating it a man who had become too friendly with vodka, accompanied by a woman, crowded his way up to us. When he found out that we were Americans he turned to the others to express his disapproval of American aid to Poland, saying they didn't need help from the United States. This started an uproar. The whole crowd turned upon him and as the one-sided argument grew to an angry pitch an army lieutenant grabbed the drunk and threw him out, coming back for his feminine companion. As our Polish speaking companions explained it all to us we knew where we stood in the hearts of the Polish people.

When we finally boarded the train it was every man for himself, with the hind-most hanging on 'till he was able to squeeze in. In the confusion and darkness three of us crowded into a compartment, already filled with Poles. The fourth member was separated and stumbled into another compartment. Unable to see his companions or to understand what was going on he sat through the long night very silent and somewhat frightened, wondering what the people might be saying about him.

The train was old and the seats uncomfortable. One of the outside doors was tied shut with baling wire, when the wire finally gave way the door remained open, let-

ting in more of the bitter cold which was already coming in through cracks around the windows. It was totally dark. We could not see the persons sitting next to us. Only by their voices could we tell whether we were sitting next to a man or a woman. There was no water on the train either to drink or to wash with. One girl brought a bottle of lemonade with which to wash her hands and face.

When we stopped at a station along the way a small boy would bring a basket of bread, sausage, and lemonade. This was grabbed from his basket and paper zlotys stuffed into his hands with no apparent regard for the money or the change it might bring. The boy crumpled the money and shoved it into his bag like so much waste paper.

We were due to arrive at Warsaw about 9:30 a. m. but it was after 2 p. m. when the train finally stopped at the outskirts of the city. After waiting 30 minutes or more for it to continue on to the station we finally got off as others were doing and walked to the station fully a mile and a half away. But it was a relief to get some fresh air after the stuffiness of our compartment, made foul by the smoke of Polish cigarettes. On either side of us were the remains of what once had been station platforms, but are just skeletons of steel girders and torn up tracks. It was evident that this was once a large railway center. As we beheld the destruction we forgot some of the inconveniences of the train and realized that the Poles were doing well to have any rail connections at all.

We received quite a scare just before we entered the station. Standing before the gates leading into the station area were armed guards. Our first dread thought was that these were Russians who would want to see our visas. But to our great relief they were only Polish guards taking up the train tickets.

The next thing that attracted our attention because it seemed so out of place in the station area was a 1946 Ford Taxi. There were a few other cabs, mostly German made, some old "beat up" army trucks used as busses and a number of horse-drawn cabs. However, all the autos put together were still a small number. Most of the people walked so we chose to walk too.

Our first concern was to find the air-lines office to get passage to Gdansk by air. We were disappointed in finding out that planes did not fly on Sunday. At the air-lines office we were rather surprised when even the uniformed men at the desk asked us for American cigarettes and candy.

Our two companions left us here to go to the city railroad office to get sleeper tickets for our trip home. We two went on to the Friends Relief office with the gifts we had brought and then walked through the streets, sight-seeing and shopping.

To our left as we walked were the great ruins of Warsaw. All the great stories written about its heroic defense for three weeks from September 8 to the 29th, 1939, and the valiant though doomed uprising of 1944, as the Russian army waited across the river, came to our minds as we looked at the gutted buildings. We saw evidence too of the systematic way the Germans had of bombing the insides of buildings and leaving the walls standing so as not to impede the army vehicles as they passed through the streets. Surely Warsaw is a grim and terrible spectre of what war can do to a beautiful city.

To our right were the business places: jewelry stores, dress shops, meat markets, and bakeries, displaying delicacies of every description: cakes, cookies, jelly rolls and other sweets. The deceiving thing about the shops was that they looked large, but extended only a little way back from the street. The backs of the buildings were still brick and rubble. A partition of packing cases and rough lumber closed off the destruction behind. The shops were but little warmer than the severe cold outside. Usually there was a small stove, about the size of a 3 gallon milk pail, glowing red, but unable to do much more than take a little chill out of the room. As we stopped in a meat market we asked for a ring of bologna. To our surprise the lady clerks did not know what we wanted as there were several kinds of sausage hanging there. After much pointing and gesticulating we finally got our sausage. As we went out we realized that bologna is not a universal word. Passing along we saw a woman standing on the sidewalk pitifully crying something we couldn't understand, but it was evident that

she was begging. Going a little further we saw another lady, clothed in rags, her feet wrapped in cloth instead of shoes, her face cruelly pinched with the cold. She was blowing on her hands which seemed to have turned near blue. She was selling artificial flowers made of twigs and painted feathers. We thought of our own heavy wool clothing, which didn't even keep out the bitter cold, and then of her tattered rags, her bare hands and cold feet and wondered why God had spared our comfortable life.

Since it was a long walk to the station, and because we wanted a new experience, we took a horse-drawn cab for 200z. By this time it was dark and lights were on in the shops but they were too few and too dim to make much impression on the darkness of the city. Whole sections of the city were totally dark.

This city with a pre-war population of one and one-half millions, now houses one-half million. Where is the other million? Perhaps no one knows definitely how many bodies still lie under the ruins. As workers dig out the great piles of bricks they continually find the bodies of men, women, and children where they fell.

Back to the Warsaw depot, which, whenever we think of it, seems almost like a dreadful nightmare. It was a milling crowd of humanity of every description: some warmly dressed and neat, but the majority poorly clad, dirty and freezing. No doubt many were travelers from various places in Poland; many were refugees; others had come into the station just to get out of the unbearably cold night air, and to find a place to sleep. Everyone was pushing, trying to push through the crowd to get into the information room or the already filled waiting room or restaurant. Women and children shoved their way here and there selling papers, sausage, bread, candy or cigarettes. When we finally did get into the information room it was packed to standing capacity. The lady at the desk was answering ten telephones at once, shouting first into one, then the other, and in between calling out to the crowd, probably telling them that some train was late.

Our train was to leave at 8:30. It was now after 8, and we had looked at a thousand faces, anxiously waiting for our companions. What would we do if they didn't come? They had taken all our Polish money to get the tickets.

How would we be able to stand it if we had to stay in this cold depot all night without even a place to sit down? When they did finally come, we found out that the train would be eight and one-half hours late. All our worries were in vain. Our good friends had found an attractive girl in one of the shops and had been enjoying her company while we sat through this hour of suspense.

Once on the train and on our way back to Gdansk we were able to enjoy our pleasant and interesting fellow travelers: some soldiers, two war widows bound for Gdansk for UNRRA horses, and several engaging civilians. We had had no luck at all on our way to Warsaw, but this was different. Our new friends took good care of us. Some had sausage, some bread, another tea. Whatever they had, much or little, they shared it with us, whom, of course, they had never seen before and would never see again. Thus we enjoyed their hospitality while above and behind us, hung the machine guns.

We were told that Polish soldiers always carry machine guns because of the forest bands which are still pillaging and burning in certain areas, especially in east Poland. The soldiers' uniform, incidentally, is similar to our own khaki but of poorer quality. His pay as a private is 100z per month, enough to buy 20 Polish cigarettes or about 8 American cigarettes. A sergeant receives 500z and a high ranking officer about 1500z.

A few of our companions spoke to us about politics. When they spoke of the Russians it was always in a whisper. As one lady said, "The enemy has ears everywhere." They told us of the systematic looting, stealing and raping as the Red army marched. The recent elections were not free at all, they said. They were "like elections under Hitler." One well dressed couple, who had hidden their clothes away from the Russians, when asked, told us, "No, we have no children. We want no children to bring up in this hopeless, helpless land."

Incidentally the only Russians we saw were soldiers on a troop train. They had gotten off the train and were washing their faces in the snow. One lady in our compartment remarked that she was surprised to see them wash at all. They were always very dirty.

As we walked to our ship that evening, there was ringing in our ears the music of the Polish national anthem as we remembered hearing it sung by the soldiers outside our compartment on the train. It seemed to us that in their singing we could surely detect a ray of hope and courage.

Our admiration goes out to such a spirit in a situation which seems almost without hope.

THE LONG WAY HOME

The exploring eagerness we all knew upon our first landing in Novyport began to wane after our trip to Studthof because of our increasing realization that we would have a difficult time getting home on schedule. Originally, we had hoped for six or seven days and were happy when we had them; but when they passed with little promise of leaving we became anxious at the delay. Most of us had left busy farms, jobs in industry, or parishes and had planned for an absence of not more than six weeks. When the Mt. Whitney finally cast off from the Novyport dock after thirteen days we were happy at last to be on our way. Our joy was short-lived, however, when we learned that the Baltic Sea was effectively cut off from the North Sea and Atlantic by the extraordinary severity of the thickened ice. It was difficult for our ship even to get out into the harbor. On the Saturday morning we spied an ice breaker with a company of Swedish coal ships in tow like a hen with her chicks and were led several miles out. Once on our own, however, crossing the Baltic, we ran into very heavy ice and frequently bogged down to a complete stop only to back up and then charge ahead with full, cutting speed. During the night even that failed and our ship stopped completely for four hours until the crew managed to free us by the use of steam hoses. Sunday morning we sailed into Karlskrona, a harbor in southeast Sweden and cast anchor alongside several other American and British vessels; little realizing how long we would have to wait before that anchor was raised again.

Our quarters, which we were to call home for a much longer period of time than ever we dreamed, was a room one deck down, approximately 45 by 30 feet, which contained forty double bunks and 80 lockers. Off to the side lay the mess hall and serving 'kitchen'. Wash rooms and showers completed the quarters, which were reasonably comfortable until we reached Poland, where the severe cold overtaxed the heating system and forced the men in some cases to keep to their bunks for warmth. Later on, icebound in Karlskrona, Sweden for seven weeks, we suffered several cases of the flu. Medical

supplies began to run out, but fortunately a Good Samaritan British ship helped us out.

All in all, good health prevailed. There was but one serious illness which threatened to leave the patient in Poland. We prayed and our prayers were answered. During the long siege of waiting a remarkable spirit of good fellowship prevailed amongst the cattlemen, remarkable considering the closeness of our quarters.

Evening church services were conducted by the ministers alternately and by several very able laymen. Again, it was a surprise to many to see the continued interest shown by the men. Night after night, throughout the three months, the services were well attended and hymns enthusiastically sung.

Special services were observed during Holy Week. A 'Last Supper' Meditation was held on the improvised volley ball court in Hold 6; a service on the 'Seven Last Words' was held Good Friday evening and a brief Easter Sunrise service was held in the ship's bow at 5:15 a. m. as the cold wind howled and threatened us with flurries of snow.

A group of men organized a "Bible Memorizing Class," and thus improved their knowledge of the Scriptures, and also helped drive away homesickness blues. As time dragged on, other clubs mushroomed. One group decided not to shave until they reached home and so the Whiskers club was formed. Another club, "The Gloom Chasers" started out by wearing all their clothing backwards. Any member found wearing clothes the right way was promptly thrown overboard—? This group branched out into wearing ribbons in their hair, carrying a book for a whole day everywhere they went and in general acted like lunatics, which in some cases did not require too much acting. The "Wind Blowers Club" chose lunching as their particular method of forgetting their troubles and soon budded out with 'bread baskets.' As their theme song they chose, "Show Me the Way to go Home." A club which never got beyond the organizing stage was the "Jackass Club," making anyone eligible who was foolish enough to board the Mt. Whitney in the first place. Initiation was deemed entirely superfluous.

Other aids to passing time were volley ball, chess,

books, cards, and just plain talk. Trips over the ice to Karlskrona and to Aspo, a nearby island, afforded us a fine opportunity to see at least a part of Sweden. One was immediately struck by the tremendous contrast of peace. Shops were full of food stuffs and dry goods; new American cars meandered through the streets, the trains were modern and on time; and the people wonderfully hospitable. The Lutheran State Church, the Methodists, the Baptists, and the Philadelphia Church all made us warmly welcome. A few of us journeyed to Goteborg on the west coast of Sweden and a few of us made the eventful trip to Stockholm, Sweden's 'Venice of the North,' 300 miles north of Karlskrona.

As the month of March drew to its close, however, the ice thawed and softened enough to make the long hike dangerous, which, coupled with deflated pocket-books, forced most of us to remain on board until we finally set sail for home.

Taking advantage of the fact that we did have time on our hands our two supervisors and four foremen devised means for really getting the ship cleaned up, probably cleaner than it has ever been since it became a cat-leship. The Poles had done the heavy work. We took over where they left off. We went over all the decks, all the stalls, with scrapers, wire brushes, and brooms. We dumped all refuse overboard, hoisted all the water pails topside, stacked them, tied them down and had things ship-shape. Thus occupied, and with frequent fire drills which invariably disturbed our after dinner siestas, we passed the long but not too unhappy time.

Hardly a man was missing from our good ship's bow when on Saturday afternoon, April 12th, after a wait of but one day short of seven weeks, the anchor at last was raised. Words cannot describe our eagerness. There never was a happier ship. The fact that we were on our way home made even the heavy ice that still remained outside Karlskrona's harbor seem friendly. We journeyed about 65 miles until evening fell. We cast anchor, and awoke in the morning to join a convoy led again by an ice breaker which threaded us through the heavy floes which so long had barred our path. Though our journeying was slow we reached Tralleborg by night and cast anchor there. We learned that a Swedish ship

had been sunk by a mine the day before between Tralleborg and Copenhagen. The captain ordered all cattle-men to arise early Monday morning. We donned our life jackets as the ship set sail and we gathered on the fan tail until the morning hours waned and the narrow channel into the Sound was won. We were free both of mines and of ice by the coming of noon. There was no barrier between us and home except the turbulent seas.

We spent Monday evening refueling in Copenhagen. No shore leave was granted but with ropes so handy and port holes so available many of the men deserted temporarily to the friendly darkness of the streets. By a seeming miracle they were all returned on board once the ship had bucketed and Tuesday saw us well up the Kattegat and then around into the Skagerrak. The North Sea was friendly once again as we made our way toward the Pentland Firth, but the Atlantic was implacable with its dark lowering clouds and the haunting halloos of the cold sea winds. The *Mt. Whitney* pitched and rolled and bounced. Empty as she was, she lacked the weight to meet the arguments of the disputing waves. Some days we made much less than 200 miles and it seemed to some of us that the way was overlong.

The darkness turned to light, however, just three days out from home. But though the sea was willing to give us rest our eagerness would not accept it. We slept less and less and waited and watched more and more until the thrill came: land! It was the south shore of Long Island. As twilight came and with it rain, we could see lights which conquered the gathering gloom with their brightness: the Belt Parkway, Rockaway Beach, Coney Island, and to the left, the lights of Sandy Hook and the Highlands of New Jersey. Then Fort Hamilton came gayly into view and Staten Island across the way. Gradually our speed subsided as we entered the Narrows; slowly and more slowly we turned around and anchored for the night.

Most of us were up almost with the dawn that happy Saturday morning. Before many hours had passed we were on our way again up New York Harbor toward the

grant spires of Manhattan. Brooklyn's green shore road was supplanted by her myriad of piers; then Governor's Island and welcoming Statue of Liberty across the way; and then the tugs, the Battery, Pier 14, and home. The Colgate clock across the Hudson said 9:45 Saturday morning, April 26th. Our mission was fulfilled.

POSTSCRIPT

Yes, our mission was fulfilled, but was it worth it? Was it worth the trouble, the weeks of waiting in Newport News, the tedious care of the horses and cattle, the hardships of cold and monotonous food? Was it worth the long delay, the absence of almost four months?

Perhaps more vividly than anything else we remember the gas chamber at Stuthof; the thick brick-walled structure with its one door, a door that locked only on the outside. That door is open now. All the hate and the fear and the unbelief that made it possible are now in check. That door is open; it is not closing upon helpless victims as once it did. But will it remain open? Not if the same hate and fear and unbelief continue to hold sway over the people of Europe! That door can close again and will unless we conquer it with the Cross which alone can answer hate with love, fear with courage and unbelief with faith. We eleven ministers, and we feel that most, if not all, of our fellow cattlemen agree with us, strongly believe that our mission of helpfulness and other missions like it to Poland, Greece, Trieste and Germany were worth-while because they gave the Cross a chance to conquer.

As we remember that gas chamber and the wooden platform on top with its arch and Cross a miracle seems to happen: the gas chamber is transformed into an altar. So great is the power of the Cross. We believe that in helping the people of Poland as we did we demonstrated to them the meaning of practical Christian democracy. We believe that this program should and must be continued. UNRRA is now dissolved but some American agency should take its place for if we turn away now from the people of Europe in their desperate need and pass by on the other side, the door to liberty will close once again and tyranny will prevail. America must give God a chance to work, to feed the hungry, to clothe the cold, to comfort the lonely, and to administer to the sick. We Americans are now God's Hands, His Feet, His Lips. We must work for Him and speak for Him. If we will, the door of hate and fear and unbelief need never be closed again.

We believe it was worth while. We remember the words of our Lord when He said, "Even as ye did it unto the least of these ye did it unto Me."

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