

THE RESCUE OF EASTERN EUROPEAN ORPHANS 100 YEARS AGO

On Friday the 20 August 1921, 108 Polish Ukrainian Jewish Orphans landed in Quebec Canada aboard SS Scandinavia. These were part of the 150 children selected and rescued by Harry Hershman, representative of the Canadian Jewish community.



The Polish Ukrainian Orphans brought out to Canada – Harry Hershman with the beard is holding a child

On the other side of the world on 21 September 1921 177 Ukrainian War and Pogrom Orphans landed in Cape Town, South Africa aboard the Edinburgh Castle. This group, now called The Ochberg Orphans, were selected and brought out by Isaac Ochberg the representative of the South African Jewish Community. (Note 1)



Group Passport 3 of 9 of The Ukrainian Orphans brought out to South Africa

The Canadian and South African governments had both agreed to allow in up to 200 orphans, subject to many conditions, including that the children be healthy.

Ochberg selected healthy children from orphanages that had been established by The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), however, the children destined for Canada were selected from the Rovno area. Over 8,000 children were examined but only about 150 healthy children could be found and there were only a handful of children under the age of 6 who were sought by prospective adoptees. Hunger and starvation was everywhere and some children were maimed and crippled from the effects of pogroms.

THE POGROMS IN THE UKRAINE 1918-1919.

In January 1921 the then British Chief Rabbi, Dr Hertz, had declared "1,000,000 human beings had been butchered and that for three years 3,000,000 persons in the Ukraine had been made 'to pass through the horrors of hell' and there were some 600,000 homeless children, 150,000 orphans and 35,000 double orphans in the Ukraine who would die from cold, hunger, or disease unless Jewish hearts remained human and came to their rescue."

In 1920 a detailed report on the Ukrainian Pogroms was submitted to the League of Nations detailing the massacre of Jews in more than 400 pogroms.

The following is a description of the average pogrom:

"The gangs break into the township, spreads all over the streets, separate groups break into the Jewish houses, killing without distinction of age and sex everybody they meet, with the exception of women, who are bestially violated before they are murdered, and men are forced to give up all there is in the house before being killed.

"Everything that can be removed is taken away, the rest is destroyed, the nails, doors, and windows are broken in search of money. On one group departing another comes, then a third, until absolutely nothing is left that could possibly be taken away. All clothing and linen is taken, not only from those who escape death, but also from the corpses of the dead."

HORROR UPON HORRORS

The pogroms in the Ukraine perpetrated mainly by the soldiers of Ukrainian leader Symon Petlura were in fact only part of the horrors. This is apparent when one looks at the causes of death of the parents of the orphans that landed up in South Africa.

The horrors commenced in 1914 with WWI with the forced relocation into Russia of Lithuanian and Latvian Jews by the Russian Tzar's uncle. In the fighting between the Germans and Russians many townsfolk were killed and left homeless as frontline towns were attacked and destroyed. Jews fought in both the German and Russian armies. *(See Pinsker Orphans rescued and Australian press items and appeals.)*

WWI was followed by the 1917 Russian Revolution; the Spanish Influenza epidemic of 1918-1919, The Polish fight for independence; Wholesale Pogroms perpetrated by the troupes of White Russian General Denikin, Ukrainian 'hero' Symon Petlura and Belarusian short time president Stanisław Bułak-Bałachowicz; 1921 Man-made famine in the Ukraine and hunger and starvation and diseases.

Finally complete chaos, devastation, crop failure, starvation and the diseases that accompany hunger and cold, added to the extremely harsh living conditions that continued well into the 1920s.

HELP

Jewish communities around the world were shocked by the news of the horrors of war and the pogroms, starvation and disease suffered by their Jewish relatives in the *Pale of Settlement*. Especially horrific, were accounts of wholesale rape, extortion and slaughter of their brethren by Polish, Ukrainian and Belarus nationalistic armies and the Red and White (Cossack) Russian troops.

The Jewish communities around the world heard the cries of their brethren whom they helped in many ways.

- The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) entered into an agreement with the American Relief Administration and with their feeding programs fed almost two million Ukrainians on a non-sectarian basis. The JDC also supported many Jewish communities in the Pale.
- Canada rescued 150 orphans, mainly from the Rovno area. They examined over 8,000 to find *healthy ones* that were transported to Toronto for adoption.
- South Africa sent funds and supplies to Poland and the Ukraine, transported children to Kfar Yeladim in Israel and supported them there. They also rescued the 177 orphans, collecting them mainly from orphanages supported by the JDC.

CONCLUSION

This period and the horrors suffered by the Jews is a forgotten part of Jewish history. It is completely over shadowed by the Holocaust and has been called the *holocaust before the Holocaust*. Much of its details were covered up by the Soviets and are unknown and so capturing this history is important. Sadly it was followed by The Holocaust twenty years later.

Note 1 Half these children were placed in the care of The South African Jewish Orphanage, now called Arcadia Children's Home, in Johannesburg and the other in The Cape Town Jewish Orphanage, now called Oranjia.

Source *The Ochberg Orphans and the horrors from whence they came and The Pinsker Orphans* both compiled by David Solly Sandler sedsand@iinet.net.au

PINSKER ORPHANS RESCUED AND THE HELP OF THE JDC

During WWI Pinsk was on the front line in the fighting between the Germans and the Russians and the city was frequently bombed resulting in loss of life and destruction of property.

Three PINSKER Orphanages were established by locals, Alter Bobrow, Elijohu Holtzman and Ze'ev Lev, with the help of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) to house the many children left without parents.

The JDC, not only supported the Pinsk Jewish Community, including the three PINSKER Orphanages, but also supported many hundreds of Jewish Communities, throughout the *Pale of Settlement*, with their orphanages, hospitals, schools, old age homes, soup kitchens, feeding programs and agricultural development and other programs.

Alter Bobrow, helped save the children and he, together with his comrades, looked after them and helped establish the three orphanages in Pinsk in 1917.

In 1921 Alter accompanied Isaac Ochberg with the 177 Ochberg Orphans, selected from orphanages in the *Pale*, including 44 from the Pinsk orphanages to South Africa.



***Children from the PINSKER Orphanages who were settled by the Jewish Community in Cape Town Africa
Ochberg Orphans from Pinsk prior to their departure from Pinsk - July 1921 - left hand side of photo***

The PINSKER Orphans Relief Fund of London supported the PINSKER Orphanages and brought out to London for adoption a group of 19 children in 1924 and a further group of 34 in 1926.



The 19 Pinsker Orphans that arrived in London in December 1924



The 34 Pinsker Orphans that arrived in London on board the Baltricer, in April 1926



Children from the Pinsker Orphanage who were settled in Kfar Yeladim in Palestine

AUSTRALIAN PRESS 1921 1922

The Hebrew Standard (an Australian Jewish Newspaper) courtesy Brian Fine.

HORROR UPON HORROR!! Friday, July 28 1922 The Hebrew Standard P5

THE UKRAINE GEHENNA

Help! Help! Help!

If there are any of our readers who have not been touched by the various articles that have from time to time appeared in our columns describing the almost indescribable hardships and cruelties that our unfortunate brethren in Eastern Europe have suffered during the last few years, surely the illustrations that appear in this issue must at least move them. So heartrending, so gruesome were the pictures received of which the pictures reproduced are but a sample, that one could but recoil in horror that such happenings were possible in this so-called civilized age.

The cry of distress has reached all quarters of the globe, and the response has exceeded by far that of any other appeal that has been made to our people. Although every section of Jewry in every country of the world has given, and given, in most cases, as it has never given before, the amount of suffering, misery and starvation is so great that the funds spent so far have but touched the fringe of relief, and unless more and still more is obtained, but little can be done to save the hundreds of thousands of our brethren.

The Sydney Committee of the Relief Fund are working hard that the response to the appeal in this city may not be behind that of others, but there is still too much apathy in this matter, and there are still too many in this city who do not realize that they must do more and still more, for their starving brethren.

ORPHANS FOR AUSTRALIA (PERTH) The Hebrew Standard

Some time ago the Perth (Western Australia) Jewish Community unanimously decided to adopt 30 orphans from the pogrom areas and funds were raised for this purpose. The committee appointed to deal with the matter chose families of high standing as foster parents for the children. Negotiations have been proceeding for official permission for the entry of these children into Australia. The Federation has now been informed by the Migration and Settlement Office of the Government of Australia that official permission has been given. Steps are now being taken by the Federation to send a special representative to Eastern Europe to select these orphans and bring them to London. They will be the guests of the Federation before embarking for Fremantle.

One can only conclude that the attempt to bring out the children to Perth (Western Australian) was unsuccessful.



All these children died of starvation. Their so-feeble groaning, their plaintive demands did not reach out ears! The Ukraine is so far off. They died with this desperate word on their lips: "Bread!"

We transmit to you this last cry. Do your duty please!



These ones have finished with their suffering. They are no more hungry. But what of the others? Those who desire death to escape the terrible tortures of hunger. And so little is wanted to save them! Are you doing your share?

AUSTRALIAN APPEAL

UKRAINIAN JEWISH RELIEF FUND.

Your Practical

Sympathy

Very Urgently

Needed

SEND YOUR DONATIONS TO-DAY TO

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The Hebrew Standard (

They must Not Die!

**—These hundreds of thousands
of starving and homeless Jews—
in the pogrom areas of Ukraine**

An Appeal to the Heart of Every Jew

The Martyrdom of Jews in the Ukraine is the greatest tragedy in the history of our people. The orgy of massacre, pillage and violation is breaking the spirit of three millions of our brethren in faith. Hundreds of communities have been wiped out, thousands of Jewish homes have been ravaged.

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY THOUSAND ORPHANS are left today as the result of this holocaust of butchery, and Jews in the devastated areas are in so terrible a condition that words cannot adequately depict their misery.

Jews in the British Dominions! Your brothers and sisters are dying by thousands, accused of no crime, brought to no trial, and guilty of no fault but that of being Jews. Help those who are left behind.

Jewish Mothers! You who are happy in the possession of homes and children in this land of safety, give thought to the children in these broken homes. Famine and disease are stalking throughout the land. **HELP** must be quickly forthcoming.

"THEY MUST NOT DIE."

These hundreds of thousands of starving Jews in the pogrom areas of the Ukraine.

This appeal is made to every Jew and Jewess throughout the land. Give, and give liberally, even at great sacrifice. The spirit of Judaism is Charity, and no more sacred occasion has ever demanded its expression.

Send **GENEROUS** Donations at Once to the **Federation of Ukrainian Jews**

IN AID OF THE POGROM VICTIMS IN THE UKRAINE.

(Registered under the War Charities Act).

26a Soho Square, London, W.1.

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Telegrams: "Ukrarelief, London."

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Under-Nourished Children
in the War-Stricken Countries in Central
and Eastern Europe **BEG FOR BREAD!**

SHALL THEY PLEAD IN VAIN?



Canadian Jewish War Relief

"HUMANITY KNOWS NO CREED"



**Shall Death
be the
Highest Bidder?**

**What
Will
YOU
Give?**



(Drawing by Boardman Robinson)

Your help is needed to save the lives of six million people in Eastern and Central Europe. They are *destitute* of food, clothing, shelter, medicine—*of everything on which life depends*. You have the power to give them life. *Their fate is in your hands. What will you give?*

Send your contribution to Paul Baerwald, Treas.

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