

POLAND'S PLIGHT EVEN WORSE THAN THAT OF BELGIUM

Hunger, Disease and Ruin Stalk the Land.

MILLIONS ARE WITHOUT FOOD

Country devastated, over two hundred cities destroyed and thousands of villages in ruins.

Warsaw, July 10.—The devastation of property and the sufferings of millions of human beings in Poland have increased so stupendously from day to day that, with communication demoralized, it is becoming increasingly difficult to gather anything like a comprehensive summary of the havoc which the war is causing. It is evident from facts now at hand that all the regions suffering from the conflict now so widespread in Europe, Poland not only is the worst sufferer at present but it will require more time than any other country to recover from the effects of the war.

The case of the Belgians, which aroused worldwide sympathy, has been paralleled generously for their assistance, is plainly not so bad as the case of the Poles, which as yet has not been so thoroughly understood by the outside world and which, by reason of this lack of information or other causes, has not attracted the interest that was aroused by the plight of Belgium. In comparison, however, the Belgians had an easy time in escaping the horrors of war by flight to England and France, but with the Poles it has been a case of facing a gun, no matter in which direction its shafts might turn. In the case of Belgium the sweep of war was swift and final, while with the Poles it has been, and still is, a matter of being swept in one direction and then the other. The area and population affected in Poland are also more than ten times that of Belgium, considering both the kingdom of Poland in Russia, and Galicia, Austria-Poland, equally devastated by the war.

While at least three large committees are at work in the relief of the conditions in Poland, they have, unlike the Belgian committees, been handicapped by the fact that the war has been waged actively there ever since the European conflict began, and that it is even more fierce today. In attempting a summary of the situation, the Associated Press has been given access to some of the reports made by the Central Citizens' Committee in Warsaw, the Committee for the Relief of the Kingdom of Poland, and the General Relief Committee for Poland in Geneva, Switzerland, and a number of private correspondence, covering mainly the period between the first of January and the fifteenth of April. It appears from these that out of the eleven provinces or governments of the kingdom of Poland, only one, the province of Siedlec, has escaped invasion. The devastated territory of the kingdom amounts to more than forty thousand square miles, in which two hundred cities and towns and nine thousand villages have been partially or entirely destroyed. Five thousand villages have been razed to the ground.

Railroad tracks for a distance of one thousand miles have been torn up. Even the plain soil has been rendered unfit for agricultural purposes by innumerable trenches and big holes bored into it by the projectiles of heavy artillery. The agricultural production of this part of Poland, representing a value of \$500,000,000 per annum, has been stopped in its entirety for lack of funds, seeds, farm hands and cattle.

Feed on Dead Horses Killed in Battle

An agricultural population of seven million people are starving. They hide themselves in forests or under the ruins of their former dwellings, having as food only roots, bark, and dead animals, including carcasses of horses killed on the battlefields.

The fate of cities and industrial regions is no better. Some of them suffered depopulation, some were flooded by a tremendous wave of refugees who had deserted the fighting zone. Eighty per cent of this class of refugees are Jews.

The city of Kalisz, capital of the province of the same name, which before the war had a population of nearly 80,000, numbers now 10,000 inhabitants. Warsaw, the capital of the kingdom, twice as large as Brussels, harbors at the present over 200,000 refugees.

Three Million Factory Hands Starving

The city of Lodz (500,000 inhabitants), the centre of the great Polish textile industry, twice captured by the Russian and German armies, looks like a cemetery. Important industrial centres like Cheshstohava, Sosnowice and the coal-basin of Dombrova, have shared the same fate. The industrial output of the kingdom of Poland, valued at \$400,000,000 per annum, has been annihilated. Three millions of people earning their daily bread in factories and mines are starving. The coal mines, though not in the fighting zone, have been flooded by the Germans for strategic reasons and all the costly machinery destroyed. The kingdom thus used all of its monthly output of 30,000 carloads receives now less than 100 carloads of coal from the distant Don basin in Southern Russia.

Meanwhile 50,000 miners in Dombrova and the adjoining mines have lost their work "for strategic reasons." All commerce of the kingdom with the Russian empire has been practically stopped, as well on account of a lack of transportation facilities as because of the interrupted international relations. These commercial transactions between the kingdom and the empire amounted for the year preceding the war to one billion roubles or \$500,000,000.

The same conditions prevail in the banking business. The transactions of the big corporations, of mutual credit associations and of savings banks have been limited to the paying out of deposits. The notes portefeuille of local banks, representing a nominal value of many hundreds of millions of roubles, bear no interest whatever, having, temporarily at least, the mere value of millions of "scraps of paper."

The total of material losses in movable and immovable properties is valued at \$700,000,000.

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On all sides there is hunger, disease and ruin. Out of a total of 1,500,000 horses in this part of Poland 800,000 have been requisitioned by both fighting armies. Not less than 2,000,000 cattle have been confiscated for the same purpose. Milk is rare and the mortality among infants shows a terrific increase. Sanitary conditions are worse than deplorably insufficient nourishment, a fatal congestion of population in certain cities reputed to be safe from immediate war dangers—in some temporary asylums in Warsaw sixty people sleep in rooms of 40x30—and a lack of medical help aggravate daily the evil conditions. In the country they are still worse. The proximity of shallow graves infecting the air and the water of wells with poisonous germs. Especially in the provinces of Lublin and Suwalki the graves of fallen soldiers have very frequently been dug in the immediate neighborhood of human dwellings.

Galicia a Vast Cemetery

The conditions in Galicia (Austrian Poland) may be still worse.

Embracing eighty-two counties, Galicia has an area of 32,000 square miles and a population of over 3,000,000. All of her territory, except Cracow and its immediate vicinity, has suffered. The country extending from the Russian frontier, from Podvolozziska up West to Buchina, for a distance of 450 miles has been destroyed by fire and cannon. The wave came from the East, was repulsed and returned again. Many places were subjected to repeated invasions as many as seven times. A hundred cities and towns and 6000 villages suffered cruelly; 2,500 villages have virtually disappeared from sight. Eight hundred thousand horses and 1,000,000 cattle have been taken away by the armies, as well as almost all provisions like corn, potatoes and fodder.

The total agricultural production of Galicia valued at \$200,000,000 yearly and the industrial output of some \$100,000,000 per annum have been destroyed. The loss will be greatly increased if the reports that the withdrawing Russian army has set fire to the Carpathian oil wells prove true. Cities like Tarnopol, Tarnow, Brody, Nisbo, Stryl, Kolomea, Stanislaw and Przemyśl have been taken away. Gloomy looking smokestacks rise out of piles of bricks are the only witnesses of the fact that human beings had once resided there.

Cracow, the ancient capital of the Polish kings (200,000 inhabitants) and an architectural jewel among the cities of medieval Europe, was not immediately touched by the war, but its inhabitants were ordered to leave and had to fly to Austrian Silesia, Vienna or Bohemia. Over a million Galicians are actually living as refugees in various parts of Austria-Hungary and are suffering there severely.

Dying by Hundreds from Hunger

In the counties of Przemyśl, Rzeszow and Jaroslaw, people are dying from hunger by the hundreds. The counties of Cieszanow, and Dowlomil in Eastern Galicia and those of Lancut, Przemyśl, Nisko, Tarnobrzeg, Jaslo and Krosno in Western Galicia are so thoroughly devastated that they look as if they had been destroyed by some terrific earthquake. No human dwellings, no roads, no cultivated fields. Among heaps of ruins dogs are running wild with hunger and flocks of crows and ravens in search of food.

YPRES RUINED BY GERMAN SHELLS

Town long the pride of Flanders is a modern reminder of the ancient Pompeii.

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