

Economic Resources of the Russian Empire

Russia is a Country Where There is an Abundance of Cheap Labor Waiting to be Profitably Employed.

By ERNEST H. GODFREY, F. S. S.

In this article I propose to bring before readers of the Journal a few notes on the economic resources of the Russian Empire by way of comparison or contrast with those of the Dominion of Canada. The occasion for doing so at this particular moment is the appearance in the Journal of the Royal Statistical Society of London of an excellent paper on Russia, by Baron A. HeyKing, Consul-General for Russia in the United Kingdom. Baron HeyKing's paper, which is entitled "The Economic Resources of Russia with Special Reference to British Opportunities," is for the most part based upon Russian Official Statistics, which are accessible in year books and other statistical publications of the Russian Central Statistical Committee, but which have hardly received the attention they deserve from British readers. Baron HeyKing stated that the statistics he brought before the Society had been compiled with the object of showing that Russia is a country of almost unlimited resources in all that is necessary to culture and civilization, and that at the same time there is an abundance of cheap labour waiting to be profitably employed in order that the agricultural products and mineral resources of the soil may be utilized for the benefit of humanity.

Russia and Canada are alike in that they both extend laterally over portions of continents having for northern boundaries the Arctic regions and the North Pole and, dipping southwards to warmer latitudes, embrace a large number of different climates rendering possible the cultivation in almost endless variety of the fruits of the earth.

AREA AND POPULATION.

In area, Baron HeyKing informs us, the Russian Empire extends over half of the continent of Europe and a third of the continent of Asia and comprises not less than 8,760,000 square miles. The Dominion of Canada embraces an area of 3,729,665 square miles; so that Canada, large as it is, is only equal to about two-fifths of the great Russian Empire, which in size is second only to the British Empire, now placed at something like 13 million square miles. The Russian Empire stretches over 163 geographical degrees from west to east and over 35 degrees from north to south. It is larger than the United States, Canada and India combined and more than twice the size of the continent of Europe. If, in area, Russia and Canada present so great a contrast, in population the contrast is greater still. The Russian Empire contains a population which Baron HeyKing places at 186 millions, which is equal to that of the whole American continent and Australia or to the combined population of the United Kingdom, France, Japan and Italy. The population of the British Empire exceeds 440 millions. Canada, with a population of a little over 8 millions, has a density of less than 2 per square mile; the average density over the whole Russian Empire is about 20 per square mile, the figures for European Russia being, however, about 72 and for Asiatic Russia about 4 per square mile. Yet notwithstanding the great differences between Russia and Canada, which these figures represent in favour of the former, the case is altered when we examine the degree in which each country has developed its resources. Both countries have enormous potentialities; but the Dominion of Canada with its comparatively small population has made much greater progress in the development of national resources. According to the Russian Statistical Annual the railway mileage of Russia in 1914 was not more than about 39,000, which represents only three miles of railway to every 10,000 inhabitants and, under half a mile to every 100 square miles of territory. In Canada, for the same year, the railway mileage was 30,795, a 33½ miles for every 10,000 persons and 0.3 of a mile for every 100 square miles of territory. This contrast is sufficient to indicate how backward the great Russian Empire is in the means by which its products must be made available for distribution, and what a vast field there is for enterprise and capital in this one direction.

AGRICULTURE.

If Canada has almost inexhaustible wealth in the fertile soils of the western plain, Russia possesses a

similar asset of untold value in the Great Plain which stretches from the western frontier to the Pacific Ocean, interrupted only by the Ural and Altai mountains, and in the famous black soils of the central provinces, which are stated to give excellent yields for several consecutive years without manuring.

In the accompanying table are placed side by side the areas and total yields of a selection of the principal grain crops of both countries for the year 1915, with comparisons per 1,000 of the population in each case:

| Crops | —Russia.— | | —Canada.— | |
|---------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| | Acres. | Bushels. | Acres. | Bushels. |
| Wheat . . . | 79,162,000 | 796,929,000 | 14,675,000 | 426,747,000 |
| Rye . . . | 69,605,000 | 910,509,000 | 112,000 | 2,394,000 |
| Barley . . . | 30,052,000 | 398,849,000 | 1,708,000 | 60,699,000 |
| Oats . . . | 45,426,000 | 855,739,000 | 11,425,000 | 523,684,000 |
| Corn . . . | 4,053,000 | 63,496,000 | 253,000 | 14,368,000 |
| *Potatoes . . | 9,548,000 | 975,828,000 | 476,000 | 85,673,000 |

(*)—1914.

PER 1,000 OF POPULATION.

| Crops. | —Russia.— | | —Canada.— | |
|---------------|-----------|-------|-----------|--------|
| | Acres. | Bush. | Acres. | Bush. |
| Wheat . . . | 426 | 4,285 | 1,884 | 53,343 |
| Rye . . . | 374 | 4,895 | 15 | 299 |
| Barley . . . | 161 | 2,144 | 213 | 7,587 |
| Oats . . . | 244 | 4,600 | 1,428 | 65,460 |
| Corn . . . | 21 | 341 | 32 | 1,796 |
| *Potatoes . . | 51 | 5,246 | 59 | 10,709 |

(*)—1914.

The table shows that although for each of these crops the areas and yields are vastly greater for Russia than for Canada, yet relatively to the population the production in Canada is the greater, for in the case of every crop, excepting rye, the areas and yields per 1,000 of the population are considerably more in Canada than in Russia. The figures indicate therefore in the first place how great in the agricultural activity and productive capacity of the Canadian people and secondly what great possibilities there are in Russia for attainment of the Canadian standard. Similarly, in the case of farm live stock, the following table gives the numbers of horses, cattle, sheep and swine in each country, with the numbers per 1,000 of the population. We take the year 1912 for both countries:

| Description. | Russia. | | *Canada. | |
|--------------|------------|-----------|----------|-----|
| | No. | No. | No. | No. |
| Horses . . . | 30,457,871 | 2,692,357 | 163 | 349 |
| Cattle . . . | 41,356,310 | 6,431,861 | 222 | 804 |
| Sheep . . . | 57,255,196 | 2,082,381 | 308 | 260 |
| Swine . . . | 12,859,619 | 3,477,310 | 69 | 434 |

(*)—Per 1,000 of the Population.

It will be seen from this table that, great as are the absolute differences, relatively the advantage is in favour of Canada, except with regard to sheep, the sheep-breeding industry in Canada having declined and the numbers being far below what they might be were more attention devoted to what generally in agricultural countries is regarded as one of the most profitable branches. The Russian Empire also produces a variety of other crops, some of which are not grown and are not possible of growth in Canada, though they are cultivated in other parts of the British Empire. Thus, the beet sugar industry is of great and growing importance in Russia, the area under sugar beet being nearly two million acres, and the annual production from 10 to 13 million long tons. Before the war the Russian exportation of sugar was limited under the terms of the Brussels convention, but it is expected that after the war the export will be on a larger scale and that German and Austrian sugar will be supplanted in the British market. Tobacco plantations in Russia cover an area of over 150,000 acres, the Empire being second only to the United States in tobacco cultivation. Fruit-growing, wine production and tea cultivation are also promising Russian industries.

FORESTRY AND FURS.

The north of Russia is covered with large stretches of forest land, much of which has not been properly surveyed. Apparently there are no estimates of the quantities of timber available; but Baron HeyKing considers that the supplies are practically inexhaus-

tible and that Russia is bound to become the chief source of supplies of timber for building, navigation, wood pulp and other purposes. Next to the grain trade comes timber as an article of export from Russia; and it is stated that for the year 1906-10 the average annual exports of timber from Russia were 164,516 tons from the port of Libau, 633,709 tons from Archangel, 962,903 tons from Petrograd-Cronstadt and 262,903 tons from Windau. In Canada, for the year 1915 the value of Canadian forestry products was estimated by the Department of the Interior at \$172,880,000.

In the fur trade Russia and Canada are competitors, both countries being rich in wild fur bearing animals. According to the Russian Statistical Annual for 1915 the number of wild animals killed for commercial purposes in 1913 was 1,108,221, of the value of \$496,546. The animals in greatest number included the squirrel, hare, ermine, fox, skunk and Siberian sable. There were also killed in the same year 1,694,054 feathered game of the value of \$208,933. Somewhat similar records are available for Canada, and the census of 1911 showed that the total value of the skins and furs of wild animals killed in Canada in 1910 was \$1,927,550, the animals most numerous comprising ermine, minks, muskrats, skunks, beavers and foxes.

FISHERIES.

The value of the Russian fisheries probably exceeds that of any other country. In 1911 the number of persons engaged in the Russian fisheries was returned as 296,200 and the value of the output at \$50,034,825. For Canada in the year 1911-12 the number of persons employed in the fishing industry was 91,132 and the value of the fish marketed was \$34,667,872.

MINERALS.

The mineral resources of Russia, states Baron HeyKing, have hardly been touched, and they await the help of friends and allies for future development. The principal minerals are gold, platinum, silver, lead, zinc, copper, iron, manganese ore, coal, naphtha and salt. Values are not given, but the quantities produced of these metals in 1912 may be compared with the Canadian production of the same year as follows:

| Metal. | Russia. | Canada. |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|
| Gold, oz. | 80,555 | 607,608 |
| Platinum, oz. | 760 | |
| Silver, oz. | 2,483 | 31,931,710 |
| Lead, lb. | 3,746,342 | 35,763,476 |
| Zinc, tons | 12,907 | 280,886 |
| Copper, lb. | 71,214,456 | 77,775,600 |
| Pigiron, tons | 4,627,242 | 1,014,587 |
| Coal, tons | 34,072,433 | 14,699,953 |
| Salt, tons | 2,101,115 | 95,053 |

Coal is present in great quantity and Siberia possesses enormous coal fields, which can be mined without great difficulty and at comparatively small expense. Their exploitation says Baron HeyKing "has been hitherto handicapped by the insufficiency of transport facilities and the lack of industrial development of the country. There is no doubt that with the establishment of proper communication and the investment of sufficient capital a brilliant future awaits these coalfields." There is likewise a great field for the exploitation of oil bearing lands, and it is estimated that the Baku oil fields extends over 2,700 acres. It is probably that the oil industry in Russia will attain important dimensions after the war.

In addition to iron, copper and salt, Russia possesses deposits of mica, asbestos, tungsten, osmium, iridium, talc, phosphates, graphite, mercury, lead, zinc, silver, aluminium, nickel, cobalt, antimony and bismuth; but she imports these commodities because only limited quantities of her own supplies are at present available for the markets.

MANUFACTURES AND COMMERCE.

In 1913 Russia imported articles to the value of about \$620,250,000, a large proportion of which she could have manufactured from her home products. Here therefore is a field for the profitable investment of capital, which after the war will probably attract British enterprise, and which should in certain directions, as for instance, the manufacture of various descriptions of agricultural machinery, appeal also to Canada. Before the war the foreign trade of Russia was very largely with Germany and Austria-Hungary; but it is pointed out that British goods could easily supplant those hitherto imported into Russia from those countries. The close and friendly relations which the circumstances of the great war have brought about between the great British and Russian Empires should and doubtless will lead to commercial intercourse of the greatest advantage to both.