

DYING PRISONERS FORCED TO WORK

Proper Food and Medicines
Denied Italians

Tortured For Hours — Epidemics
Sweep Ranks of Helpless and
Thousands Succumb in Austrian
Camps

Rome, Nov. 17.—About 10,000 Italian and Serbian officers and men taken prisoners by the Austrians and permanently disabled for military service owing to wounds or illness have been exchanged for an equal number of Austrian prisoners of war during this year. Neither Italy nor Austria agreed to the hospitalization of prisoners of war in Switzerland, and their direct exchange has been most satisfactorily arranged by the Swiss Red Cross.

The treatment of prisoners of war in Austria is most inhuman. Owing to food shortage the rations given to the unfortunate prisoners are hardly sufficient to keep them alive. Sanitary conditions in prison camps are neglected. Proper medical attendance is lacking. Hardly any effort is made to combat contagious diseases and epidemics, with the result that the mortality among the prisoners is appalling. Although insufficiently fed, prisoners are forced to work and the hard labor to which they are subjected hastens their exhaustion to such an extent that a large proportion of Italian soldiers return to Italy in a dying condition.

The treatment of Italian prisoners of war is more cruel, as the Austrians bitterly hate the Italians and consider them as traitors because, despite the Triple Alliance, they are fighting against and not in favor of the Central Empires. Evidence of the cruel treatment of Italian prisoners of war in Austria is afforded by the reports of the officers and men who return to Italy, whose accounts are especially interesting inasmuch as they contain reliable particulars about general internal conditions in Austria.

Herded Into Cars

When the Austrians take Italian soldiers prisoners before sending them to the prison camps behind the front they deprive them of all their clothes, which they exchange for a thin cotton uniform similar to that worn by convicts. Italian uniforms and underwear, if in good condition, are used by the Austrian soldiers, whose equipment cannot be renewed. The linen shirts worn by the Italians are torn into strips and used for bandages, which even if washed are never properly disinfected, since soap cannot be had. The prisoners are then sent to different camps in closed railway trucks badly ventilated and so crowded that for days and sometimes weeks the unfortunate men can hardly move. Their food on the journey consists of thin vegetable soup distributed every twenty-four hours, and a hunk of hard bread made of straw and bran.

On arrival at the prison camps the men are lodged in wooden huts, badly and hastily built, where they are condemned to freeze in winter and roast in summer. Officers are not deprived of their uniforms and they are allowed \$1 a day to buy food. Naturally, owing to the prohibitive prices of the prime necessities of life the officers can afford only a simple and plain diet, but as most of them receive money from home, which they share with their comrades in captivity they are able to improve their fare. Each officer gets two sheets and a paper lined blanket. As paper is getting scarce, officers' blankets are no longer lined, with the result that in winter they are compelled to wear their overcoats in bed.

The soldiers sleep on the floor, without any bedding, except straw or shavings, which are never changed. Their rations consist of a piece of bread made of ground beans, acorns and straw or bran and two bowls of vegetable soup every day. Once a week they get some meat, generally goat, or sheep meat. The soldiers are made to work twelve hours a day in the fields or else in digging trenches, building roads, or railways, and even in munition factories, sometimes. They are paid three cents a day.

Suspended By Wrists

If they refuse to work they are punished, for the first offence with bread and water for a week or a fortnight, and for the second offence with the stake. They are tied to a stake from their wrists, with only their toes touching the ground, and left in this position for two hours at a time. If they faint, a bucket of water is thrown in their faces, and after a short interval the ordeal is renewed.

When the prisoners are ill the only medicine they are really given is castor oil. In case of epidemics hardly any ef-

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fort is made to prevent infection, and last year at Mauthausen 5,000 Serbian prisoners died of typhus in a few weeks. According to the report of an Italian medical officer who was confined at Freistadt, in Upper Austria, 5,000 Roumanians were starved to death.

The rations given to the men in all prison camps are made up as follows: For breakfast, 80 quarts of boiling water with one pound of flour mixed in it, distributed among 100 men; for dinner, forty pounds of potatoes, beets or pumpkins boiled in water, which is occasionally improved with the addition of cloves. Exceptionally one salted codfish is distributed among 100 men instead of boiled vegetables. Every five days a sheep is distributed among 100 men after the best bits have been stolen by the Austrian territorialists in charge of the prisoners. For supper, vegetable soup, as above.

The daily ration of "war" bread for each man is about nine ounces. The following is a price list of the articles of food sold in one of the prison camps in Austria:

	Pound.
Tea	\$36.00
Pepper	16.00
Oil	6.00
Lard and ham	1.80
Cheese	1.85
Rice	4.00
Onions	.28
Beans	.30
Potatoes	.25
Ordinary wine quart	.58
Beer, quart	.58

Real Tobacco a Myth

Nothing can be bought in Austria without a card, which fixes the amount for which the holder is entitled. Cards are even necessary to buy matches, and as for tobacco substitutes made out of dried leaves perfumed with medicine are sold at fancy prices. Real tobacco no longer exists.

Destitution is spreading both in Austria and in Hungary, especially among women whose work in factories is no longer needed. Many factories are closing for lack of raw material as well as for the fact that many industries are no longer profitable. Thus in Hungary thread cannot be supplied to lace and button workers, and as a result 28,000 women are out of work. The same may be said of the lace industries, which will have to stop work altogether soon.

As for sanitary conditions in Austria besides many contagious diseases, dysentery spread alarmingly during summer. It was due to exceptional heat coupled with the consumption of raw vegetables and unripe fruit, which in most cases constituted the only food available to people of the lower classes. Even when patients could be taken to hospitals and provided with nourishing food their weakness, due to denutrition, could not be overcome and few recovered.

At Roelice, in Bohemia, many peasants have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment for stealing food. None served his term, as the prison authorities could not supply food. The scarcity of food is so great that people are advertising in the newspapers offering to exchange boots or articles of clothing for a ration of lard or half a dozen eggs. No new clothes can be bought without a certificate that second-hand clothing has been donated or sold, and a special card is necessary to buy clothes or underwear. Nothing in theory is wasted in Austria.

Even garbage or kitchen refuse is collected by the authorities, who convert it into fodder for cattle and pigs. To encourage its collection householders are offered half a pound of pork for every twenty pounds of garbage given to the authorities. Food for cattle is almost as indispensable as that for human beings. In fact, agriculture is seriously threatened in Bohemia, where the cattle have been reduced to only a million and a half head, and owing to army regulations and the scarcity of fodder a further reduction of 50 per cent will be necessary.

As a result a milk famine will be inevitable next winter, while the cultivation of land will be almost impossible next spring owing to the lack of draught oxen and manure. Other agricultural regions both in Austria and in Hungary are similarly menaced, so that the outlook is dark, and it is feared that before long not only prisoners of war will be starved in Austria, but the inhabitants as well.

HUNS ARE TREATING ITALY LIKE BELGIUM

Massacring Peasants of Venetia
and Burning Homes — Made
Imitations of Papers

Rome, Nov. 17.—When the Germans first invaded the Venetian plains it seemed as if they had changed their tactics and were doing everything to conciliate the population left in the villages evacuated by the Italian troops. Now, how-

ever, convinced that all their blandishments are unavailing and that the inhabitants are more firmly loyal, they are reported to be committing the same atrocities as in Belgium. They have entered peaceful villages, it is said, breaking into the peasants' homes, where only women, children and old men are left, and after seeking the houses and attacking the women, kill the children before their mother's eyes

and set fire to the villages. It is said, that many inhabitants have perished in such configurations, having been wounded by the invaders and being unable to escape from their blazing dwellings. Another of their reported practices is to tie Italian prisoners in lines before them, thinking thus to prevent the Italian troops from firing upon them. It has now been proved that enemy officers dressed in Italian uniforms cir-

culated among the Italian troops at the beginning of the Austro-German drive. These men spoke the Venetian and Piedmontese dialects perfectly, having taken courses at the military academy in Turin. In the first phase of the attack they ordered the abandonment of important posts, cut telephone wires, and erred in Italian. "Everybody for himself."

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Another German trick was the falsification of Italian newspapers. On October 20, in a given sector of the front, there were distributed by the thousands what purported to be copies of the *Giornale d'Italia* and the *Corriere della Sera*, perfectly imitated in size and printing. The letter press contained terrifying descriptions of revolutionary disorders in Naples, strikes in Florence, revolts in Sicily and Apulia, of hundreds of dead in Liguria, and thousands in

Tuscany, while English infantry were represented as having fired on women and children, also French cavalry as having trodden the bodies of revolutionists under their horses' hoofs. All this was described with such details and plausibility that it was enough to upset the minds of ignorant peasants. Investigations are being made to discover by what means these false copies reached the trenches.

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