

Poland under the Germans

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JAMES HENRY  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

# POLAND


UNDER THE

# GERMANS.



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1916.

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# POLAND UNDER THE GERMANS.

(From "The Times," February 24th, 1916).

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## THE FOOD EXPORTS.

The semi-official *North-German Gazette* published on February 8th a leading article on "The Food Problem in Poland," by way of answer to the statements in Mr. Asquith's letter of January 14th to the Polish National Alliance, Chicago.

Mr. Asquith stated that "the present shortage of the necessaries of life in Poland is due to the systematic confiscation and export of native stocks by the occupying armies," and that "notwithstanding the deplorable condition of the country to-day this process of spoliation still continues." The Prime Minister's statements are regarded by the German Government organ as "probably" based on the article from a leading member of the Polish Independence Party, published in *The Times* of November 25th. "The actual basis of its assertions," says the *North - German Gazette*, "is the system adopted with regard to grain by the German administration owing to the backward condition of the country in the matter of railways and mills." It alleges that the Polish mills are not equipped for dealing with wet grain, and

most of the harvest of 1915 was gathered in Poland under very unfavourable conditions. "It can be proved at any time by documentary evidence," continues the German organ, referring to the period subsequent to September 1st, 1915, "that the quantity of grain carried to the German mills near the Polish frontier is not larger than the amount reimported into Poland in the form of flour." The system is represented as worked for the welfare of the local population, and it is stated that it cannot be abandoned.

About the year 1914 the German Government prefers to keep silent; it might have been inconvenient to explain why the population was starving in the winter and spring of 1915 in the western governments of Russian Poland, which have been little affected by the ravages of war except in the form of German officers; and why the dry harvest of 1914 had to be treated in the same way as the wet grain of 1915.

It is naturally impossible to check the figures quoted by the *North-German Gazette* representing the export of grain from Poland as balanced by the reimportation of flour from Germany, but all evidence derived from other sources throws a very different light on their "system."



## POLISH GRAIN FOR GERMANY.

In the parts of Russian Poland under German occupation a monopoly of trading in grain (over and above the amount consumed in the district where it has been grown) has been conferred upon the German "Import Company." There are strong indications that the system of taking the Polish grain to German flour mills has really been adopted as a way to ruin the Polish milling industry, as a means of extorting money from the starving population of Poland, and finally, as the most expedient method of concealing the withdrawal of food from the country.

It is certainly curious to note that, while the *North-German Gazette* dwells exclusively upon the deficiencies of the Polish mills and railways as the justification for the export of grain to Germany, this explanation appears in a post-script only, as if it were a happy afterthought, in the answer which Herr von Born-Fallois gave to the Executive Committee of the "Agricultural Society of Russian Poland" last autumn. On the other hand, the justification upon which Herr von Born-Fallois lays weight—the necessity for carrying the grain out of the reach of enemy spies—has now been entirely dropped. In the case of other Polish industries, which

have been left out of view in the discussion as to corn, one does not know what explanation could be given for the carting away of their raw materials to Germany and the consequent stopping of their work.

The German Government derives a revenue from its dealings in Polish grain, and the privileged German "Import Company" is making enormous profits. Are these also indispensable features of the indispensable German scheme for feeding a starving country?

The *Nowa Reforma*, of Cracow, of November 20th, 1915, quotes the following paragraph from the *Nowy Kurjer Lodzki*, a paper appearing under the German censorship:—

"At a meeting of the Town Council of Lodz Mr. Winnicki, a Polish councillor, inquired why the German 'Import Company' pays  $7\frac{1}{2}$  roubles for 1 cwt. of rye when it buys it in the marts of Russian Poland under German occupation, but charges at Lodz 23 roubles for a bag of 'war flour,' although it contains hardly 40 per cent. of the 1 cwt. of rye? In answer to Mr. Winnicki's question, the senior burgomaster, Herr Schoppen [an official appointed by the German Administration] answered that the inhabitants of Lodz were certainly being unfairly treated in that matter, but that he could do nothing to reduce

prices, since the prices at which the 'Import Company (Limited)' bought grain in Russian Poland, as well as the prices it charged for grain at Lodz and elsewhere, had been fixed by Field-Marshal von Hindenburg, Supreme Commander in the East, and could not, therefore, be changed by the town administration."

The *Kuryer Lwowski*, a Polish paper appearing under the Austrian censorship at Lemberg, publishes in its issue of January 9th a letter from Wloclawek, in North-Western Poland—*i.e.*, the district from which the Germans derive a very considerable part of their grain imports:—

"The losses caused by the war in our district (says the correspondent) are extremely small. The district of Kujawy and the country round Kutno give the impression of a well-stocked larder. Agriculture would pay very well, were it not for the German 'Import Company,' which lowers the price of grain, and raises the price of flour in the towns. For this reason grain is considerably cheaper under German occupation, but flour is dearer than in the districts occupied by the Austrians.

"The districts of Kujawy and Kutno are the centre of our agricultural industry. This branch of industry has suffered less than others by the war. But the German authorities are trying to

limit the production of sugar, starch, chicory, and prefer to export raw materials such as beet-root, potatoes, grain, &c.

“The factories of Wloclawek, of which there were many before the war, and all of which worked extremely well . . . . work at present only part of the time, so as to give their workmen at least a minimum income. . . .”

#### DAMAGING GERMAN ADMISSIONS.

In the Reichstag debate of January 15th, the Prussian Deputy Minister of War, General von Wandel, as was stated in this column on January 19th, said :—

“We owe it in great part to the skilful and untiring activity of the economic committees that our soldiers in the field are fed as well as they are, and that large stocks, which have made it easier for us to feed our people, have been brought from the occupied territories into Germany. The officers who co-operate in this work have rendered a great service to the Fatherland.”

Thus it appears that by some miracle of multiplication, the corn which, according to the *North-German Gazette*, comes back in full quantity (*restlos*) to Poland in the form of flour serves also to feed Germans in the Fatherland.

Further admissions were made in the Prussian Diet on February 16th. The Socialist spokesman, Herr Hofer—and it must be remembered that the published reports of parliamentary debates are carefully censored—then said:—

“Great misery prevails in the occupied districts of Russian Poland. Therefore only stocks of which there is a superfluity (*der direkte Ueberschuss*) ought to be exported from Russian Poland to Germany.”

Obviously, then, Germany is at present taking out of Russian Poland other than “superfluous” stocks.

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# GERMAN EXACTIONS IN POLAND.

(From "The Times," May 12th, 1916).

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## A HEAVY BURDEN.

The amount of damage done by the Germans in Russian Poland is incalculable. They have done it by direct requisitions and thefts, and by ruin inflicted on industry. From Lodz alone they have taken away machinery and raw materials to the value of £3,300,000, from Czestochowa to the value of £1,800,000; they have cut down irreplaceable forests and devastated the country. The time has not yet come for attempting an estimate of these losses.

The following account deals merely with the quasi-legal forms of the German exactions, with contributions, taxation and concessions to companies of German monopolists. The figures quoted below cover exclusively the Polish territory under German occupation and that only for the period up to January 1st, 1916. They are derived mainly from public returns and are absolutely trustworthy as far as they go, but

they are by no means complete; wherever estimates are made they tend to be well below the mark.

The contributions levied on the eighteen towns for which it has been possible to obtain statistics (the list, however, is incomplete) amount to £56,060. In November, 1914, the Russian Government, on account of the general distress, suspended the exaction of certain taxes. The German authorities not only re-introduced this taxation, some of it at increased rates, but decided to exact the payment even of the arrears. Thus, the Germans reintroduced the land tax (raised by 100 per cent.), the hearth tax and the tax on movable property in towns and urban districts, and also the tax on occupied houses and the industrial taxes. These taxes had produced in 1912, £3,400,000. They have also introduced new taxes on timber, on joint-stock companies, on dogs and on firearms. A conservative estimate of the amount levied by these taxes, up to January 1st, 1916, puts it at £800,000.

#### POOREST CITIES IN EUROPE.

Supplies, lodgings, &c., are being exacted from different towns for the German Army and for the Government authorities. Up to January 1st, 1916, Warsaw has expended in that way

£180,000 (£36,000 a month) and Lodz £250,000 (£25,000 a month). These two industrial cities, probably now the poorest in Europe, are unable to feed their starving populations and have to raise heavy loans through German banks, and still they are compelled to pay these regular contributions. The same happens in the case of other towns.

Dues are charged on all kinds of imports. The Food Branch of the Citizens' Committee of Warsaw alone has had to pay up to January 1st, 1916, £36,300 in import duties on salt, pepper, herrings, fish, tea, coffee, cocoa, beans and oatmeal. The total amount of import duties paid for the same period by Warsaw and Lodz alone is estimated at £70,000. The income from that source is growing rapidly. In January, 1916, Warsaw paid £69,000 in import duties.

In the chief urban districts of Russian Poland the German Government have introduced a monopoly in grain and flour. The transaction is most complicated and involves an ingenious system of exports of grain to Germany and the reimportation of a certain amount of flour to Poland. It is calculated that the German Government and their concessionnaires spend on the rye, wheat and barley which thus passes through their hands £329,600 a month. As they



charge for the same £440,480, they make a profit of about 25 per cent. on the transaction. In the agricultural districts a tax of 1 mark is raised on the grinding of every 220 lbs. of grain. It is calculated that this tax yields £20,220 a month. Thus the German authorities make out of grain and flour £131,082 a month.

The tax on sugar is levied nominally at the old rate of 1·75 roubles for the pood (36 lbs.), but the German authorities calculate, with their usual ingenuity, that 1·75 roubles were before the war equivalent to 3·50 marks, but 3·50 marks now fetch according to the exchange arbitrarily fixed by the Germans 2·31 roubles—this is therefore taken as the rate of the new tax. With the help of this manipulation they have raised during the four months up to January 1st, 1916, a total of over £230,000.

Owing to the standstill of industry the consumption of coal has fallen to 40 per cent. of its previous level. There is no direct tax on coal; but whereas in Germany the price has increased by 3 kopeks ( $\frac{3}{4}$ d.) on the pood, in Poland the increase, owing to the manipulations of the Government and their concessionnaires, has increased to 33 kopeks. The total surcharge made under this heading is calculated for the five months in 1915 at £1,200,000.

At the beginning of the war the Russian Government abolished the sale of vodka. The German administration have reintroduced it for fiscal reasons—in spite of protests. Out of the monopoly in alcohol, established in December, 1915, it makes a revenue of about £700,000 a month.

But as has been stated, this survey is incomplete. It does not include Excise taxes levied in the provinces, fees for permits to travel, the revenue from tobacco and beer, &c. It is certainly a most conservative estimate to put the monthly revenue derived by the Germans from the part of Russian Poland under their occupation at £1,500,000 a month. The average revenue which Russia used to derive in 1912 from the whole of Poland amounted to £1,915,342 a month, which sum included import duties paid on goods which merely passed through Poland, but were in reality paid by the consumers in Russia.

Thus the two results yielded by the above survey are :—

(1) That the Germans are *now* drawing from the ravaged half of Russian Poland which they occupy approximately the same income as the Russian Government used to derive in peace time from the entire country.

(2) That from the beginning of the war up to January 1st, 1916, the Germans had extracted by quasi - legal methods — from taxation and monopolistic concessions—at least five to six millions sterling from that part of Russian Poland alone which is under German (not Austrian) occupation.

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# THE SUFFERINGS OF WARSAW.

(From "The Times," June 17th, 1916).

## GERMAN EXACTIONS.

[*The following article tells of a city of 1,000,000 people suffering from starvation, and with industry at a standstill, and yet compelled by the German invader to pay exactions which must add financial ruin to the miseries of the inhabitants.*]

The Cracow *Czas*, of April 25th, published a memorandum on the financial condition of the city of Warsaw, which has been presented to the German authorities by the City-President, Prince Z. Lubomirski. The memorandum, though mutilated by the Austrian censor, forms a powerful and incontestable indictment of the German administration and its financial exactions. Careful perusal of it shows why relief is needed in Poland and why the German authorities are so keen on getting it.

Besides the ordinary expenditure of £1,754,315—about £400,000 above the average of the last three years—the city of Warsaw has to bear an

equally heavy burden of extraordinary expenses. Every month £100,000 is spent on poor relief, £28,000 on separation allowance, &c. “ Finally, one has to add the expense of complying with the different demands of the German authorities. Their exact amount cannot be estimated in advance, but between August 5th, 1915, and March 14th, 1916, it was £368,400.”

Against this enormous expenditure there is only a small and uncertain income. “ The house-owners pay no taxes, as most of them receive no income. . . Hence, though the income of the city, including the sums to be repaid to it by the German authorities, was estimated for the coming year at £789,596, it is very questionable whether more than a part of it will be collected, in view of the steadily increasing pauperization of the city. . . .”

### GROWING DEATH RATE.

The misery is indescribable. In August, 1915—that is, in the first month of the German occupation—the death rate was 15·88 per 1,000 (calculated to the year). It has risen steadily since October, 1915, and has now reached the figure of 34 per 1,000. (Here follows a significant deletion by the Austrian censor in the text of the memorandum as published in the

*Czas.*) At the time when Warsaw passed into the hands of the Germans about £4,814 a month was being spent by the city on the free feeding of the population; by March, 1916, this item of expenditure had risen to £51,680!

In view of the rapid pauperization of the city its financial needs could not (and cannot) be met by fresh taxation. Recourse was inevitably had to loans. Two loans have been raised since Warsaw has passed under German rule, one amounting to £500,000, the other to £1,000,000. At the present rate of expenditure a third loan would be necessary, and should it not be successful "the city will be faced in the near future by financial ruin, of which the economic and social effects will be incalculable."

The City Council, therefore, suggest to the German authorities a list of measures which would help towards relieving its financial distress. The list in itself is a most eloquent summary of some of the German financial dealings and exactions:—

" I. That the German authorities should return to the city the £138,825 which they owe it.

" II. That the city be freed from all requisitions and orders to provide supplies, especially beyond its own boundaries.

“ III. That the German authorities should pay back the money due to the city for supplies received.

“ IV. That the city should be freed from the duty of feeding the garrison.

“ V. Also from building expenses and repairs of barracks, Government buildings, &c., and should be compensated for similar expenses in the past.

“ VI. That the expense of repairing the Prince Poniatowski Bridge should be borne by the German authorities as under the present conditions it is not required by the city.

“ VII. That the city should be assisted in the payments of separation allowances and pensions, as by their character these are charges incumbent on the State and not on the city.”

### TRADE IDLE.

But even more important than all these purely financial questions is the fundamental problem of the economic recovery of the city itself. “ A city with a million inhabitants,” the memorandum says, “ cannot be fed except by a revival of its own activities.” These came to a standstill when the battle front crossed Warsaw, and have never been resumed, as was hoped. At present only about 10 per cent. of

the normal number of workmen are employed in the Warsaw factories. Some light is thrown on the nature of the difficulties which impede a revival of trade by the remedial suggestions made in the memorandum. It proposes, among other things :—

“ That the old Customs and freight tariffs be restored. (The protective tariffs against Germany were abolished immediately by the Germans and only purely fiscal duties left.)

“ That the factory plant, machinery and tools, and the most indispensable raw and auxiliary materials (*e.g.*, grease), should be freed from requisitions and sequestration.

“ That Government orders should be placed with local factories and artisans.”

It must be remembered that the memorandum is not an indictment of criminals, but a petition presented by the city of Warsaw to its present “masters.” It would be easy to supplement it with a list of requisitions by the German authorities, some of them of quite recent date, and of the organized attempts at securing a market for German goods in Russian Poland at the expense of the local industries by preferential treatment on railways and by facilities in matters of correspondence, communication and in the collection of debts. Grinding taxation



has been imposed on the country. As was shown in an article published in *The Times* of May 12th, from the destitute, devastated part of Russian Poland in their occupation, the Germans derive at present the same average amount of revenue which the Russian Government used to collect from the entire country in times of peace. In fact, everything has been done by the Germans to ruin the country, to kill its industry and to pauperize its population—and now they send out to the entire world appeals on behalf of the starving Polish women and children! Indeed, never before have murderers at large had either the audacity or the humour to appeal on behalf of the widowed wives and bereaved orphans of their victims.

“A city with a million inhabitants cannot be fed except by a revival of its trade,” says Prince Lubomirski. This has to be kept in mind when discussing any relief-schemes. Doles will not remedy the German-made misery in Poland, for a real cure could be found only in a thorough change of the German system. Yet if that cannot be attained and the highly desirable relief work is to be undertaken, whether by private people or by official bodies, some safeguards must be introduced against its being rendered nugatory by the German exactions.

The memorandum of the city of Warsaw clearly shows that although it is now spending on food alone for its destitute population more than its total income, the German authorities continue to burden it with heavy taxation, requisitions and orders for supplies. If relief from outside lightens the crushing burdens of the Polish municipalities, will not the German authorities treat it as a welcome opportunity for imposing fresh taxation ?

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## INDENTURED LABOUR IN GERMANY.

(From "The New Statesman," June 10th, 1916).

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In November, 1915, *The Times* published a series of articles (now become almost a historic document) on "German Rule in Poland"; none of the German official or semi-official scribes has ever dared to contradict their statements. Their author, amongst other things, described the German attempts to compel Polish workmen to migrate to Germany. Subsequent developments tend to bring into still clearer light the circuitous means whereby the German authorities "requisition the human material" after having ruined Polish industry by openly robbing its raw materials. They can be gathered from the following documentary evidence which the Germans themselves cannot possibly repudiate.

(1) An article appeared on October 21st in the *Deutsche Lodzer Zeitung*, one of the many papers in Russian Poland, owned and run by the German historian Herr Georg Cleinow, who now significantly combines the business of newspaper publisher with the office of chief German Press Censor for Russian Poland. The very

heading of the article, “*Our Workmen in Germany*,” can leave no doubt concerning the strange conversion of Herr Cleinow from rabid hatred of the Poles to an edifying sense of community. “We have repeatedly indicated,” starts the article, “how unfounded and absurd are the fears of the Polish workmen who hesitate to apply to the German labour-exchanges for employment in Germany. The Polish workman in Germany enjoys the full protection of German laws on a par with his German colleague, and we have had to point out more than once that the Polish workmen in Germany feel perfectly contented, as appeared from a series of letters written by them and published in the *Deutsche Lodzer Zeitung*.” Then follows a letter from “an inhabitant of Lodz,” who assures the readers that “in Germany agreements are sacred and *must* be kept.” “Relatives of mine are employed in Germany and are very well satisfied. Letters from them may be seen by applying to me.” Neither the name nor the address, however, of this friendly would-be exhibitor were given! The article of the *Deutsche Lodzer Zeitung* closed with the following touching paragraph: “The few factories (at Lodz) which are still active will, in view of the lack of the raw materials, shortly stop working, and in a few weeks all factories will be idle. It is impossible to say

when they will resume work. The management of the big factories will shortly stop paying to their (unemployed) workmen the small subsidies. What will our workmen do **then**? In view of the approaching winter and the small chances of finding employment, everybody ought to seek work abroad, as he will at home be faced with starvation."

Had the Lodz manufacturers confided their intentions to the journalist, Herr Cleinow? No, it was Herr Cleinow, the official, who was foretelling their action. This is proved by a statement in the *Lodzianin* (November, 1915), a paper appearing at Lodz under German censorship, that "the manufacturers have been instructed to pay subsidies only to workmen employed by them for at least fifteen years, *i.e.*, mainly to old people, unfit for work in Prussia. . . . The Town Section for Poor Relief grants help only to those who produce certificates from the German labour-exchanges stating that they are unfit for work in Germany. . . ."

Similar action was taken by the Germans all over the country; by promises of fair treatment and by threats of starvation they tried to get the Polish workmen to migrate to Germany. Their endeavours were not wholly unsuccessful.

Lodz and Sosnowiec supplied tens of thousands of emigrants. But even smaller centres yielded their contingents; thus, *e.g.*, according to an official return published at Czestochowa in March, 1916, the local labour-exchange had placed in Germany 9,352 persons. According to an estimate published in the *Kurjer Poznanski* (Posen) on April 9th, 1916, the sum total of Polish workmen who have migrated to Germany during the war amounts to about 180,000.

(2) The article in the *Kurjer Poznanski* cited above describes the condition of the Polish workmen who had gone to Germany. "The relations of the season labourer to his employer are regulated by the agreement, . . . yet there is no tribunal to settle differences between them. . . . The workman, transferred into strange surroundings, frequently illiterate and thus unable to understand the stipulations of the agreement, has to rely on the goodwill of his employer and is unable to guard his own interests. . . . When the labourer, who (as an alien enemy) is not allowed to leave the place of his employment, feels wronged—as it often happens—and deserts his work and his employer, he exposes himself to punishment. . . ." This more than moderate statement of the case, published in a paper threatened by persecution

at the hands of the Prussian Government authorities, is eloquent in its reticence. It acquires, however, its full value in the light of actual occurrences.

On February 10th, 1916, the Berlin *Vorwärts* published an article under the heading "Free or Unfree Labourers?" which reads as if a further chapter to Herr Cleinow's article on "*Our Workmen in Germany.*" "A considerable number of workmen from the occupied districts of Poland, especially from Lodz," writes the *Vorwärts*, "had been employed for some time in Berlin. These workmen had been placed with the co-operation of the local German police and military authorities, and they remain under police control. From these circumstances some employers deduce the fact that neither the German industrial laws nor any other legal rules relating to the employment of labour apply to these workmen. This point of view was upheld in an especially glaring way last Wednesday by a defendant before Division 8 of the Industrial Court at Berlin." A Polish workman from Lodz sued the City of Berlin for damages; he had been engaged by its gas-works as a locksmith, but was being employed on different work; he therefore left their employment and asked for his papers, without which he could not get work

anywhere else. He was refused the same. The argument of the counsel of the City of Berlin was as follows : “ The workmen from Lodz are not free labourers, but a kind of civilian prisoners of war. They are not subject to the industrial laws, and cannot therefore sue before an industrial tribunal. They have no right to change employment according to their pleasure. Only if the employer states in their official papers that the contract of labour has been duly solved, then they may seek other employment. . . .” The court, it is true, declared itself competent to judge the case, but decided against the plaintiff; it advised him to go back to work, as he knew “ what he had to fear if the fact of his having left his employment was, in accordance with the rules, reported to the military command. . . .”

A nearer explanation of this threat is supplied by a paragraph in the Memorandum which the President of the City of Warsaw, Prince Z. Lubomirski, presented to the German Governor-General in March, 1916. “ The freedom of the Polish workman in Germany,” says he, “ is in reality completely restricted not merely by the contract, but also by the conditions laid down by the police. He has only the choice between work in the factory to which he has been sent



and a concentration camp for prisoners of war.” Thus it is evident that the counsel of the City of Berlin does not stand alone in his view concerning the status of the Polish workman in Germany.

Also the following passage in Prince Lubomirski’s Memorandum deserves attention : “ The ignorance of the language and conditions (in Germany) makes it impossible to our workman to defend himself, among other things, against *exploitation on the part of the canteens, in which he is compelled to buy his food.*”

(3) The last chapter of the story of “ Our Workmen in Germany ” can be found in any issue of the *Verordnungsblatt für das General-gouvernement Warschau* (Official Gazette of the General-Government of Warsaw). Practically in every number whole pages are covered with military warrants for the apprehension of the “ perfectly contented ” Polish workmen who without permission have left their places of employment.

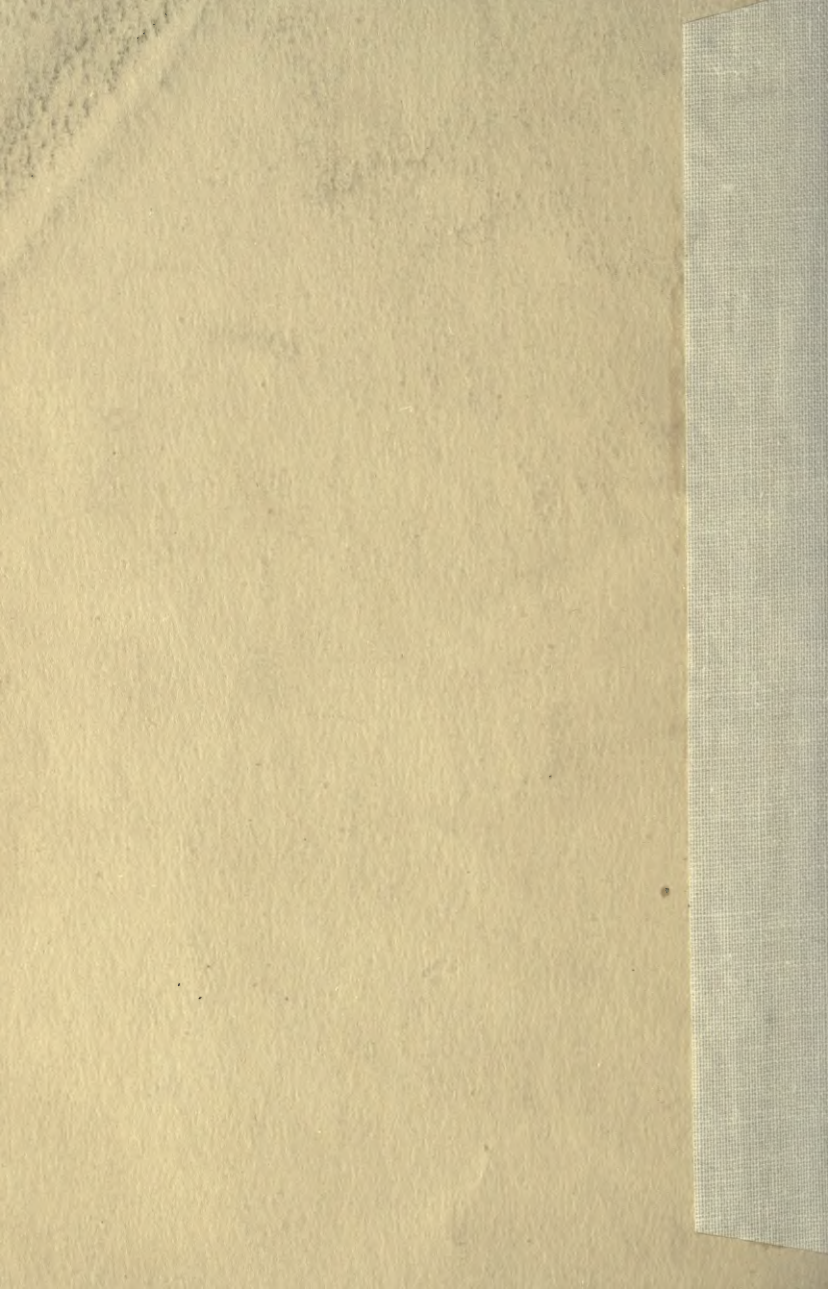
As far as the agricultural season-labourers are concerned, special regulations have been recently issued which practically “ bind them to the soil ”—*glebae adscripti* was the mediæval term for serfdom. According to the *Kölnische Zeitung* on April 1st, 1916, the Minister for Trade and

Commerce has forbidden till further notice the professional employment agencies to negotiate posts for foreigners engaged in the years 1914, 1915 and 1916 in agricultural work or as domestic servants, The explanation of this order is that when the war broke out the Russo-Polish agricultural labourers *and other foreign labourers* employed in Germany were kept back in order to maintain the supply of labour. To keep them through winter is less profitable than to have them for work in summer ; their employers have therefore gained a vested interest in them and “ the intention of the order is to prevent anybody else getting the advantage. . . .” The “ other foreign labourers ” who were “ kept back ” are certain to have been practically all Austrian Poles—according to the calculations of Herr Markitan (Vienna), based on the official statistics, about 250,000 Galician season-labourers go every year for the summer to Germany. In past years the scandalous treatment which they experienced at the hands of the Prussian authorities occasionally provoked even official protests on the part of the Austrian Government—but this does not seem to have occurred in the present case as now the age of *Mittel-europa* (the Union of Central Europe) has evidently begun.









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Poland under the Germans

