

GERMAN WAR PRACTICES

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"However, the men maintained their refusal to work, 'because they were unwilling to co-operate in acts of war against their country.'

"On April 30th the requisitioned workmen were not released, but shut up in the railway carriages.

"On May 4th, 24 workmen detained in prison at Nivelles were tried at Mons by a court-martial, 'on the charge of being members of a secret society, having for its aim to thwart the carrying out of German military measures.' They were condemned to imprisonment.

On May 8th, 1915, 48 workmen were shut up in a freight car and taken to Germany.

"On May 14th, 45 men were deported to Germany.

"On May 18th, a fersh proclamation announced that the prisoners would receive only dry bread and water, and hot food only every four days.' On May 22nd three cars with 104 workmen were sent towards Charleroi."

"A similar course was adopted at Malines, where, by various methods of intimidation, the German authorities attempted to force the workers at the arsenal to work on material for the railways, as if it were not plain that this material would become war material sooner or later.

"On May 30th, 1915, the Governor-General announced that he 'would be obliged to punish the town of Malines and its suburbs by stopping all commercial traffic if by 10 a. m. on Wednesday, June 2nd, 500 workmen had not presented themselves for work at the arsenal.'

"On Wednesday, June 2nd, not a single man appeared. Accordingly, a complete stoppage took place of every vehicle within a radius of several kilometres of the town."

"Several workmen were taken by force and kept two or three days at the arsenal."

Belgians Asked to Make Barbed Wire.

"The commune of Sweveghem (Western Flanders) was punished in June 1915, because the 350 workmen at the private factory of M. Bekaert refused to make barbed wire for the German army.

"The following notice was placarded at Menin in July-August, 1915: 'By order: From to-day the town will no longer afford aid of any description—including assistance to their families, wives, and children—to any operatives except those who work regularly at military work, and tasks assigned to them. All other operatives and their families can henceforward not be helped in any fashion.'

Punished for Refusal to Work for German Army.

"Similar measures were taken in October, 1915, at Harlebekelez-Courtrai, Bisseghem, Lokeren, and Mons. From Harlebeke 29 inhabitants were transported to Germany. At Mons, in M. Lenoir's factory, the directors, foremen, and 81 workmen were imprisoned for having refused to work in the service of the German Army. M. Lenoir was sentenced to five years' imprisonment, the five directors to a year each, 6 foremen to six months, and the 81 workmen to eight weeks.

Interference With Red Cross.

"The General Government had recourse also to indirect methods of compulsion. It seized the Belgian Red Cross, confiscated its property, and changed its purpose entirely. It attempted to make itself master of the public charities and to control the National Aid and Food Committee.

Trickiness of German Rulers of Belgium.

"If we were to cite in extenso the decree of the Governor General of August 4th, 1915, concerning measures intended to assure the carrying out of works of public usefulness, and that of August 15th, 1915, 'concerning the unemployed, who, through idleness, refrain from work,' it would be seen by what tortuous means the occupying Power attempts to attack at once the masters and the men."

October 12th, 1915, the German authorities took a long step in the development of their policy of forcing the Belgians to aid them in prosecuting the war. The decree of that date reveals the matter and openly discloses a contempt for international law.

Decree of October 12, 1915.

"Article I. Whoever, without reason, refuses to undertake or to continue work suitable to his occupation, and in the execution of which the military administration is interested,

such work being ordered by one or more of the military commanders, will be liable to imprisonment not exceeding one year. He may also be transferred to Germany.

Germans Flout International Law and Order Belgians to Work For Them.

"Invoking Belgian laws or even international conventions to the contrary, can, in no case, justify the refusal to work.

"On the subject of the lawfulness of the work exacted, the military commandant has the sole right of forming a decision.

"Article 2. Any person who by force, threats, persuasion, or other means attempts to influence another to refuse work as pointed out in Article 1, is liable to the punishment of imprisonment not exceeding five years.

"Article 3. Whoever knowingly by means of aid given or in any other way abets a punishable refusal to work, will be liable to a maximum fine of 10,000 marks, and in addition may be condemned to a year's imprisonment.

"If communes or associations have rendered themselves guilty of such an offence the heads of the communes will be punished.

"Article 4. In addition to the penalties stated in Articles 1 and 3, the German authorities may, in case of need, impose on communes, where without reason, work has been refused, a fine or other coercive police measures.

"This present decree comes into force immediately.

"Der Etappeinspekteur,

"VON UNGER,

"Generalleutnant.

"Ghent, October 12th, 1915." Cardinal Mercier's brief comment is as follows: "The injustice and arbitrariness of this decree exceed all that could be imagined. Forced labor, collective penalties and arbitrary punishments, all are there. It is slavery, neither more nor less."

October 3, 1916, German Government Inaugurates Wholesale Deportations.

Cardinal Mercier was in error, for the German authorities were able to imagine a much more terrible measure. In October, 1916, when the need for an additional labor supply in Germany had become urgent, the German government established the system of forced labor and deportation which has aroused the detestation of Christendom. The reader will not be misled by the clumsy effort of the German authorities to mask the real purpose of the decree.

The Decree of October 3, 1916.

"Decree Concerning the Limiting of the burdens of public charity * * *

"I. People able to work may be compelled to work even outside the place where they live, in case they have to supply the charity of others for the support of themselves or their dependents on account of gambling, drunkenness, loafing, unemployment, or idleness.

"II. Every inhabitant of the country is bound to render assistance in case of accident or general danger, and also to give help in case of public calamities as far as he can, even outside the place where he lives; in case of refusal he may be compelled by force.

"III. Anyone called upon to work, under Articles I or II, who shall refuse the work, or to continue at the work assigned him, will incur the penalty of imprisonment up to three years and of a fine up to 10,000 marks, or one or other of these penalties, unless a severer penalty is provided for by the laws in force.

"If the refusal to work has been made in concert or in agreement, with several persons, each accomplice will be sentenced, as if he were a ringleader, to at least a week's imprisonment.

"IV. The German military authorities and Military Courts will enforce the proper execution of this decree.

"The Quartermaster General, Sauerzweig.

"Great Headquarters, 3d October, 1916."

(To be continued next week.)

The Food Administration has sent out through all State administrations a warning to corn, barley and oats millers and to wholesale and retail dealers in the products that at the present prices of these grains corn meal and oat meal should be selling at least 20 per cent below the price of wheat flour and that corn flour and barley flour should be selling at least 10 per cent below wheat flour.



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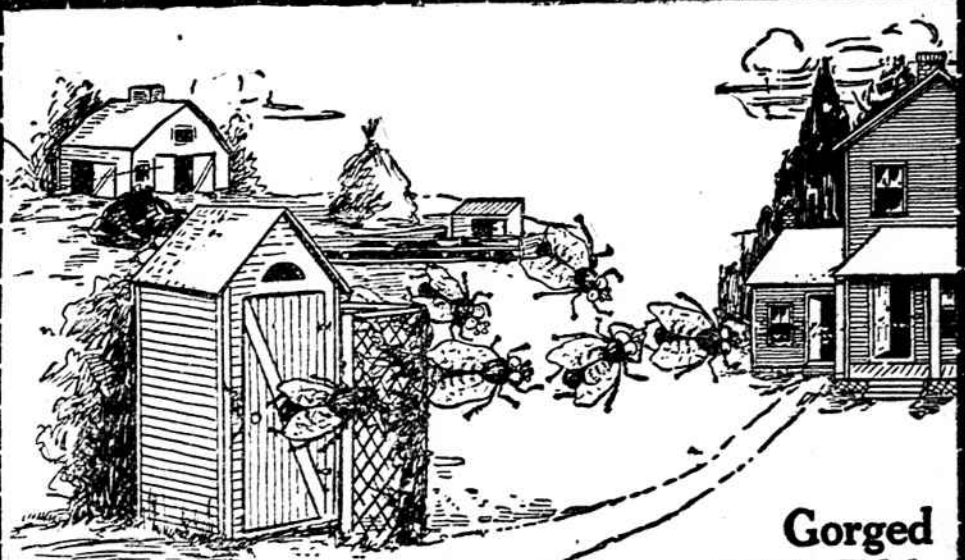


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