

SPEEDY DEATH FROM HUNGER FACES FINLAND

Lack of Flour and Other Foodstuffs Constitutes Serious Menace to Nation

New York, Dec. 7.—Speedy death from hunger threatens the greater part of the population of Finland unless they can obtain flour from the United States, asserts Dr. Kaarlo Ignatius, Commissioner of the Finnish government for negotiating the release of foodstuffs by the United States government, in a statement to The Associated Press. The threat to Finland is not privation or even chronic starvation, he declares. Concerning Finland's needs and its causes, Dr. Ignatius said:

"In regard to food supply, Finland is worse off than any of the European states whose sufferings have been brought before the American public. For months past, our people have been eating bread made out of flour mixed with pinebark and lichen; but even with this expedient we cannot hold out, as the flour reserve virtually is exhausted, and even our hardy people cannot eat unmixed bread.

"The sufferings endured in the summer were terrible; and since I left Finland in September they have become much worse. Nothing can save us except the prompt release by the American Government of the flour which we have already ordered and paid for in the United States.

Never Self-Supporting

"Finland has never been self-supporting as regards food. Her three and a half millions of people scattered over 373,000 square kilometers of territory, have depended largely upon foreign supplies of grain, in exchange for which they exported forestry products. Before the war, we imported annually about 400,000 tons of breadstuffs; and of these about 30,000 tons came from the United States. The rest came from Russia. With war, the import from America ceased and as Russia's grain food troubles grew and her railroad service became disorganized, the import from Russia ceased also. Then starvation began.

"All I want is the release of enough flour to save us from death and hunger. Privation we have stood and are willing to stand. We ask for this concession and we base our demand upon justice as regards the past and upon policy as regards the future.

"As regards the past, we are only asking for payment for services already rendered to the Allies. These services have been of great value. Finland loyally helped Russia as long as Russia was fighting, and she is willing to help in future if Russia resumes fighting.

Finland Is Loyal

"During the war, Finland has been absolutely loyal. This in the face of great provocation by the now-extinct autocracy. In September, 1914, in return for Finnish expressions of loyalty, Nicholas II issued a decree further supporting the Finnish language and abolishing what little was left of our Constitution. Yet we remained loyal. We mobilized our industries on a war basis with a thoroughness and efficiency which have been acknowledged repeatedly by the Petrograd government.

"All our cities, in particular Helsinki, Tampere, and Abo at once became munitions workshops. They supplied Russia with uniforms, boots, leather goods, shells, cartridges and machine guns. In our ports we built destroyers and torpedo boats. The former minister of War General Polivanoff, informed a newspaper correspondent that Finland's war industries were flourishing and were a model to Russia.

"Those war-industries, important factors in Russia's resistance, proved to be one cause of our present lamentable plight, and that is why we cite them as a reason why America should help us now. Under normal conditions, we should have been paid for our munitions in Russian money; and allowed with this Russian money to import Russian and foreign foodstuffs. In fact, we were flooded with Russian paper rubles; but were

not allowed to buy necessities of life either in Russia or abroad. We got so far as to order breadstuffs in Russia; we even paid for them in advance; and the Provisional Government promised to allow their export to us; but owing to transport disorganization we got nothing. Thus we suffered directly from our help to

Russia. If we had not concentrated on munitions making, we might have diverted our industrial labor into agricultural channels, and conditions would not have been quite so bad as they are.

Supported Russia

"We supported Russia in other ways. As long as we could, we sent

her milk and butter. We supported a vast Russian naval and military garrison, which alone adds a big percentage to our population figure, and we support an innumerable army—estimated at 200,000—of civilian Russians; and thus relieve the food strain in Russia.

Justice demands that we should

not be punished for our past sacrifices. Policy demands that we should be ensured against starvation in future. Our war industries are still mobilized; they are highly efficient; and if Russia continues the war, we can give her greater help than she can expect from her own inefficient and anarchical industries.

But this will be possible only if we have the necessary food. The Allies cannot expect hungry artisans, whose wives and children are perishing, to keep to munitions work.

"Our population is not pro-German. It was, I admit, anti-Russian, or rather anti-autocracy. It has always been devoted to America, Eng-

land and France, from which countries in our darkest hour we received sympathy and moral support. I have myself always championed the Allies' cause at home; and I do not desire to see my hungry fellow-countrymen throwing themselves in despair into Germany's hands. In order to gain Scandinavian support,

Germany a month ago ostentatiously sold breadstuffs to Sweden. Probably she would do the same to Finland, but that is not the kind of help we want.

"We want help from the Allies—which in this case means help from America, and we are confident that we shall get it."

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Useful Gifts

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