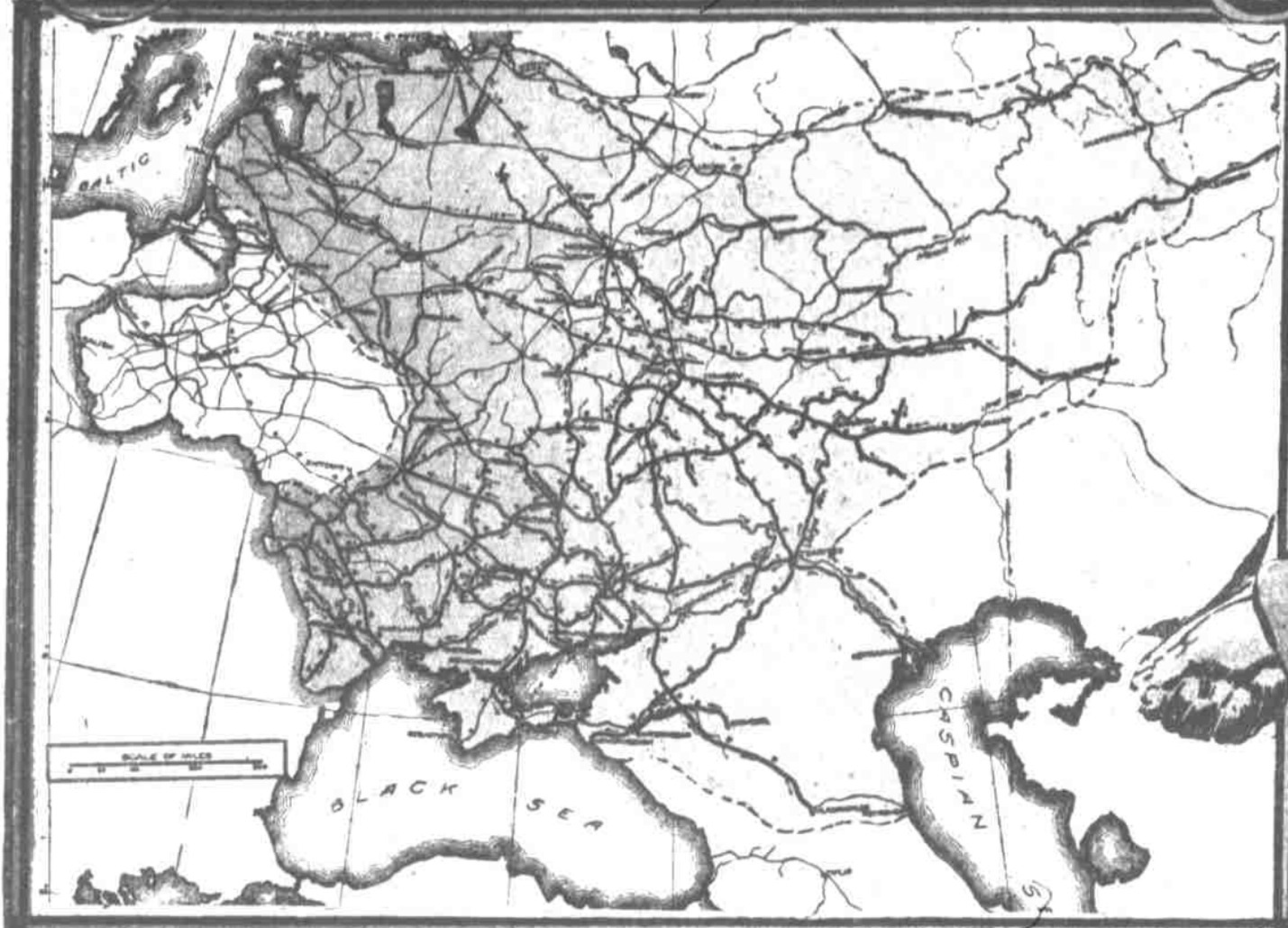


PORTLAND, OREGON, SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 13, 1910

The New King of Wheat



EXPLANATION:
— MAIN BELTWAYS ON WHICH SHIPMENTS OF WHEAT ORIGINATE
— SHIPMENTS OVER WHICH LARGE SHIPMENTS OF WHEAT ARE TRANSPORTED
— ALL OTHER RAILWAYS

Russia's System of Wheat Transporting Railways

Russia the World's Greatest Granary, to Which We May All Have to Look for Food

WHEAT is healing the wounds of war, literally in Russia's case. When, recently, it was announced that the land of the czar had a bumper crop of cereals, a new era opened for those untold millions of peasants who, but four decades ago, were in the thralls of serfdom.

Not only did Russia's wheat crop exceed America's for the second time on record, but it was 100,000,000 bushels greater than the greatest previous crop. Irrespective of what happens in America, that spells prosperity for Russia.

Roughly speaking, this excess wheat crop would just about pay the interest due foreign nations on Russia's five billions of national debt.

That means the balance of this year's trade will be in Russia's favor. She can keep her gold at home—a good part of it, at least—and when settling time comes, her wheat exports will foot the foreign bill.

Gold at home means plenty of cheap money. Not only that, but practically all of the land-tillers—and they represent three-fourths of the population—are fattening on a plentiful crop of rye while they are enjoying the wheat money.

Maybe prosperity has been a long time coming to these poor peasants, but they have it now, for sure. And much as this bumper crop means to them, it means equally as much to the rest of the world.

As surely as the sun shines, America seems quickly coming to the day when she will herself import wheat. Then where will hungry Europe turn? To Russia, of course. The land is there, and the people to till it. Truly, the golden harvest fields appear to foreshadow a new and happy life for a sorely stricken land.

WHEN modern methods and machinery succeed the waste and shiftlessness of the past, there will be a new tale to be told of Russian wheat.

What is now to be considered is that every bushel produced represents the maximum amount of labor and money. Most of the peasants, who scarcely yet realize that they are out of bondage, go about the work of farming in the manner of the Middle Ages.

Only near the great ports, or along the large river or railway arteries of trade, is any approach made to American efficiency in planting and harvesting. Yet, with hand sowing and reaping, the wheat crop of 1909 reached the tremendous total of 783,000,000 bushels, just about 20,000,000 bushels greater than America's crop, which, in its turn, was the largest, with one exception, ever recorded.



Russian Women Harvesting

To produce these millions of bushels of grain more than 65,000,000 acres were cultivated, so that the average per acre was not an awful lot above ten bushels—not over a dozen at most. What will the crop be if Russia reaches France's average of 20 bushels to the acre, Germany's 28, Denmark's 41 or Great Britain's 42?

Then, what belongs to Russia, but is not included in the official figures, is the trans-Caucasian crop, which is usually somewhat in excess of 40,000,000 bushels.

Added to this, in the future outlook, is the prospect for tremendous increases in Siberia and the northern part of Manchuria.

Up to this time the Siberian grain production has barely justified expectations. One reason is that the distances are so great, and the railway facilities are so limited, that freight rates to market points are prohibitive.

Altogether, the outlook for the "Little Father's" children was never more promising. At least, they are not hungry now, for they had 72,000,000 acres in rye last year, and that crop was as generous as the wheat.

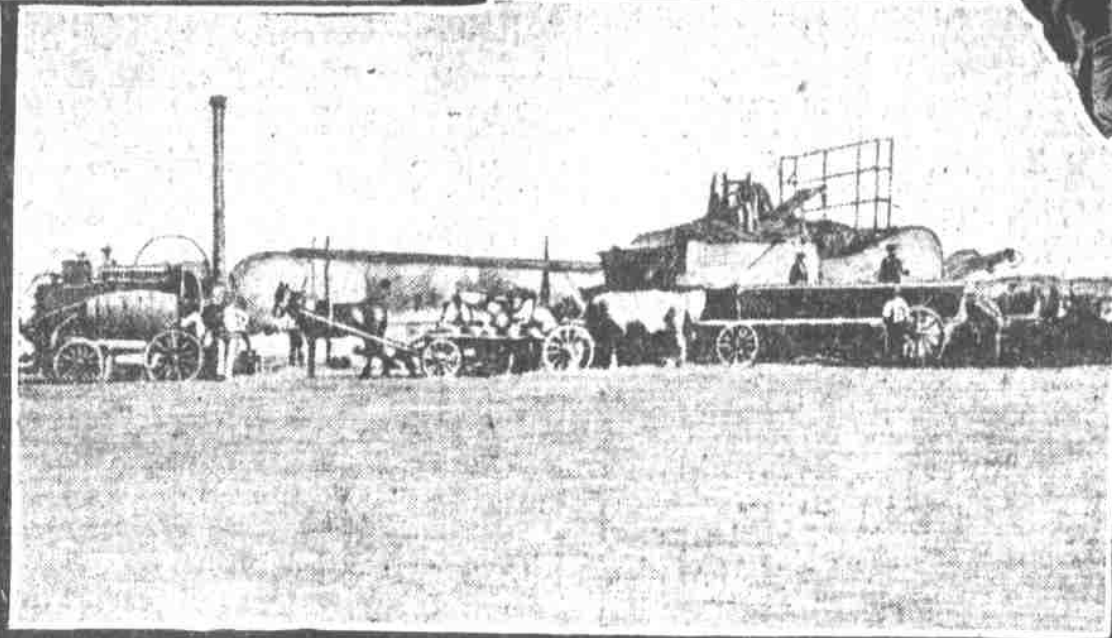
EATS RYE, SELLS WHEAT

Now, the Russian eats rye and sells wheat. In spite of the fact that the use of wheat for food is increasing, its consumption barely averages two bushels per person in a year, while for rye the average is between five and six bushels. When both are plentiful, every one is happy.

Scarcely can it be imagined, here in America, what this agricultural boom means to the Russians. Still little better than nomads, the peasants are absolutely dependent on the soil. The population is so great, and the industrial development yet so much in embryo, that war itself is hardly so disastrous as poor crops.

Then, for three years previous, the land was at its worst. In most places there was widespread poverty; in many famine.

Plenty, therefore, comes after a long period of privation. Once more the tiller of the soil can at least be certain of his black bread and vodka. Through the vast stretches of southern Russia, which feeds grain to the seaports, there is feasting and merriment where, for five years



A Harvesting Scene

and more, the ravages of the far eastern war and the horrors of succeeding famines have cast a pall over the land.

Real children of the soil are these subjects of the czar who are at last basking in the joys of prosperity. Roughly speaking, they are in numbers half again as great as our own 80,000,000 or 90,000,000, yet it takes three-fourths of all of them to produce crops that compare with ours. Still making a general comparison, it is hardly overdrawn to say that if all conditions in America were similar, all the inhabitants of the country would be required to man the farms.

That such a number of people is required to till the soil is a consequence of the antiquated methods which still prevail. That net profits are small is a result of equally primitive financial methods.

When the peasant gets his crop, he cannot, like the American farmer, hold it for favorable prices. Just about harvest time the tax collector comes around, and all except the wealthy landowners must realize on their crops.

For this reason the peasants are at the mercy of the middlemen. Usually, there are from

four to six of these brokers, who collect profits before the grain is actually loaded on steamers for export.

A Russian, Dr. J. M. Rubinow, who was formerly in the Division of Foreign Markets, has given an authentic account of the manner in which middlemen wax fat off the soil. He says:

"The buyer is either a local speculator or the agent of some firm of grain dealers in a distant city. The local speculator has an advantage in that he is often the local banker and the creditor of the peasant. Agents of the local speculators are often awaiting the arrival of peasants with their loads of grain some distance from the markets, and make energetic efforts to direct them to their principals. The profits of the local buyer may be judged from the fact that the commission for his service often reaches 10 per cent. of the purchase price of the grain.

"The primitive character of the transactions is shown by the fact that in many countries on the Volga the local buyers, instead of competing with one another, determine by lot by whom each wagonload of grain, as it appears, shall be bought.

ARE LEARNING SLOWLY

"The more fortunate peasants, who live convenient to large markets, are able to make personal deliveries of their grain, and are slowly learning modern methods and defending their interests."

However, the number of peasants who live close to large markets is comparatively small. That is another reason why the profits of a crop are cut down materially. In America the average cost of transporting grain to market is only a fraction over 5 cents a bushel. In Russia it is more than 13 cents, not counting the first cost of hauling.

By railway the average haul of grain intended for internal consumption is 132 miles, while that for export travels from that distance on up to 265 miles, according to which port it is sent.

Average hauls by water are even greater. Grain which goes up the Volga travels from 300 to 500 miles. That which goes to the mouth of the Dnieper travels 83 to 129 miles; to the mouth of the Dniester, 115 to 213 miles; to the mouth of the Don, from 104 to 311 miles.

(CONTINUED ON INSIDE PAGE.)



Farm Laborers