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NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE REGAINED TERRITORIES

The lowlands of Gdansk and Malbork are among the most fertile lands in Poland. The highest yield from one hectare of land reaches 33½ quintals of wheat, 34½ quintals of barley, 300 quintals of sugar beets, and 400 quintals of fodder beets.

Forests are one of the biggest natural resources in the Regained Territories. On lands lying south of the Bug and the San rivers, average prewar forestation was only 19 percent; during the German occupation it fell below 17 percent. For Slask, it reaches 27 percent, Ziemia Lubuska over 40 percent, and Pomorze Zachodnie 26 percent. In the territory formerly called East Prussia, forestation amounts to only 18 percent because of the large number of lakes located within the territory.

Forests located in the Regained Territories comprise 40 percent of the total forest area in Poland. In the Regained Territories forests were not devastated by the war like those located in central and southern Poland. The larger part of the trees located in the Sudetens are spruce which are needed for Poland's chemical industry. Beech trees, necessary to the bent-wood furniture industry, are the predominating trees in forests located in Ziemia Lubuska and Pomorze Zachodnie. In former East Prussia and in parts of the Pomorze Zachodnie, alder trees are predominant. These trees are used by the plywood and veneer industry. Oak and birch trees are found in all forests. Pine trees are abundant in all forests; however, the Taborski pine forests and Jansborski forests are outstanding and world famous.

The most valuable of the natural resources in the Regained Territories are the minerals. Pomorze Zachodnie and East Prussia are covered with thick diluvial strata poor in minerals. Only peat, brick clay, small amounts of amber, gravel, and deposits of chalk and limestone are found here. In Pomorze, there are deep deposits of rock salt which may mean that petroleum deposits are located in this area.

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Black coal is the principal natural resource of the Regained Territories.

There are two coal basins in this area: (1) in the western part of Gorný Slask, between Bytom, Zabrze, and Gliwice, and (2) in Dolny Slask, in the mining zone of Walbrzych, on the Czechoslovak border.

The first of these two coal basins is part of the larger Gorný Slask mining area, and contains at least 10 billion tons of coal over an area of 570 square kilometers. The deposits are not too deep underground and the seams are thicker than those of the Donets and Western Europe. Coal seams are 2 meters thick on the average, but there are places where they exceed 8 meters. This permits the use of modern excavation and loading machinery. The quality of the coal extracted is among the best obtainable in Poland and Europe. It is less friable, burns with a high flame, and leaves little ash. It is better for coking than coal from former Polish coal fields.

The coal deposits of Dolny Slask are located along the Czechoslovak border in the Sudetens from Kamienna Gora across Walbrzych up to Nowa Ruda near Klodzk. They contain only 1,300,000,000 tons of coal. Mining conditions are very poor. The coal deposits are thin, interrupted by volcanic rocks, irregularly layered out. Because the coal deposits are so thin, igneous rock has to be extracted together with the coal and separated at the surface. In addition, expensive measures must be taken against frequent explosions caused by gas and coal dust, and against sudden inundation by water.

A further serious handicap is represented by the distances separating the Dolny Slask coal mines from great transportation routes. The nearest port on the Odra River is 80 kilometers away. These coal mines would have been closed down a long time ago, except for the high grade of the gas coal, producing metallurgical coke of unsurpassed quality.

The productive capacity of the Dolny Slask basin is about 6 million tons annually, whereas the mines of the regained part of Gorný Slask, once they are fully restored, may produce 30 million tons annually. After war damage has been eliminated, the Slask coal mines will produce 90 million tons of coal annually.

The possession of the large coal mines of the Regained Territories has raised Poland to the rank of one of the greatest coal-exporting countries. In the future, because of the great changes in the world economy, Poland may export liquid fuel derived from coal instead of coal itself. The rapidly dwindling oil resources in the USA and increasing motor traffic means that the replacement of petroleum fuel with synthetic liquid fuels in the USA alone would consume 500 million tons of coal annually. Hence, the synthetic gasoline industry in Poland may have great chances of success, but this will require enormous investments.

In addition to black coal, there are deposits of brown coal in the Regained Territories estimated at 10 billion tons. The largest coal deposits for easy extraction are in Dolny Slask between Nisa Luzycka and Bobr. The coal deposits of the border city of Zytawa, Zgorzelec, to the north along the right bank of the Nisa River across Piensk, Przewoz, Cybalin, Trebuta, and Zasioka, beyond Gubin, are 1-50 meters deep. In some places the seams are 20 meters thick, and near Zytawa up to 60 meters thick. The latter have been intensively exploited for over 100 years.

Forty percent of the brown-coal extraction in a number of mines is obtained by strip mining. The Turow mine alone near Zytawa accounts for over 60 percent of the total brown-coal extraction, with production of nearly 3 million tons annually.

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In Ziemia Lubuska, the brown-coal deposits stretch from Nowa Sol across Zielona Gora, Sulechow, Swiebodzin, Sulecin, and up to the lower course of the Warta River to Skwierzyna and Kostrzyn. These coal deposits are much thinner, deeper, but regularly laid out. The coal is of good quality and can be used by local industries in the natural state after drying.

North of the Warta and Notec rivers the brown-coal deposits are deep, beneath the strata of the postglacial period. They are of a low quality and of little use for industrial purposes.

Since natural brown coal contains 40-50 percent water, it is too expensive to transport. Without proper bricquetting it can be used only in the immediate vicinity of the mine. Consequently, raw brown coal has been used mostly to produce low-cost electric current. It has served to electrify the greatest part of the Regained Territories. It is being used in glassworks, brickyards, porcelain factories, paper mills, distilleries, sugar plants, etc.

According to the Central Statistical Office, 7,594,034 tons of brown coal were extracted in 1937 in the area encompassed by the Regained Territories, which indicates the great importance of brown coal in the economic development of the area.

Peat can play an important role in the economic life of the Regained Territories since it is found in areas containing neither coal nor any other source of energy. Large peat bogs in the eastern part of Zatoka Szczecińska, around Kolobrzeg, and in former East Prussia (largest deposits) contain hundreds of millions of tons of peat unsurpassed in quality. Up to now, peat has been exploited mainly for domestic fuel or stable litter for cattle and partly as insulation material for the building industry. Pojezierze Mazurskie has the most favorable conditions for large-scale processing of peat since it could be extracted simultaneously with meadow lime, the latter being a good fertilizer and building material. Peat could be shipped over the wide network of waterways and it would have a wider sales market there than anywhere else in Poland, since this market has poor accessibility to Dolny Slask coal. According to Engr St. Turczynowicz, an electric power plant with a 20,000-kilowatt capacity could operate 50-75 years on 100 million square meters of peat. There are several peat bogs of such size in former East Prussia alone which could be used as a basis for local electrification.

As for ores found in the Regained Territories, the most important to the Polish economy are the zinc and lead ores. These metals are usually found together and contain an admixture of silver and cadmium. Deposits of these ores found in Dolny Slask are very small. In Gorny Slask, particularly near Bytom, there are two thick ore deposits containing a total of approximately 25 million tons of rich ore. This almost doubles Poland's prewar zinc resources. Prior to the war, Poland's zinc metallurgy depended on imports from other countries. Such imports are no longer necessary to support Poland's position as one of the world's largest exporters of zinc. However, ore imports are economically feasible and advisable for the conservation of domestic deposits for the distant future. The old iron-ore deposits for which Slask was renowned at one time have long since been depleted. Layers of meadow ore found everywhere in Slask are so thin that they cannot assume much importance. The same is true of the western part of Pomorze. Only the former East Prussia near Niborek and Szczytno have deposits as much as one meter thick, but, on the other hand, the distance from ironworks in Gorny Slask presents an obstacle.

Only one larger magnetite iron-ore deposit, located in Krzyzatka, at the foot of the Karkonoszy Mountains near the Czechoslovak border, is of practical value. This ore is very rich, containing up to 56 percent iron, with an average iron content of 35 percent. There are several deposits 2-3 meters thick. Unfortunately, the supply of this ore is very limited, so that even if the present extraction were doubled to 100,000 tons per year, this would be only 5 percent

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of the country's planned extraction and less than 3 percent of the supply needed by metallurgical industry. Similar rich ore is found in Jawor and Zlotoryja, but the deposits are even smaller than in Krzyzatka.

Copper deposits have long been exhausted or abandoned in prewar Poland, likewise in Dolny Slask. In 1938, copper deposits were discovered in Leszczyny and Grodziska, Zlotoryja Powiat, with less than one percent copper content. According to E. Krenkel, one million tons of pure copper could be obtained from these deposits, since they are so vast. Smelting of such low-grade ore in modern metallurgical plants is entirely feasible but requires highly complicated and expensive equipment. If it is taken into consideration (1) that almost everywhere in the world -- with the exception of the USSR, Rhodesia, the Belgian Congo, and Chile -- copper deposits are becoming depleted and (2) that in the not-too-distant future it will be necessary to exploit low-grade ore containing less than one percent of pure metal, then the ore found in Dolny Slask takes on new economic importance.

Even now, Poland could obtain self-sufficiency in copper, provided the requirement of profitability is set aside, since profitability of a given branch is not necessary from the standpoint of the total economy. Large-scale production of cheap electricity from brown coal for the electrolysis of copper is entirely feasible. The urgency of such a program depends of how rapidly electrification and the Polish electrical and engineering industries develop. Such development is unthinkable without copper. Copper can be imported, to be sure, but Poland cannot afford such imports; furthermore, Poland should make every effort to exploit its own natural resources, including those of the Regained Territories.

Among nonferrous metals, some nickel is obtained from Dolny Slask. It is found in the Zabkowice area in Szklara, Grochow, and Procana. It is also located further south in the Klodzka area and to the north in the neighborhood of Swidnica. Only the Szklara deposits are of industrial significance. They are low-grade ores, averaging about one percent nickel content. In the raw state, they are unfit for smelting and must first be put through complicated processing to form concentrates of 5-27 percent metal content. During World War I, the Zabkowice metallurgical plant produced 300-960 tons of metal a year from this ore. Later, as competition from the cheaper Canadian nickel became keener, processing of this ore was abandoned until just before World War II.

Since the Szklara nickel deposits are the only ones in Poland, they may assume great economic importance, especially in the event of the cessation of ore imports from abroad. For greater self-sufficiency, the Polish authorities activated the mine and the metallurgical plant, with a 1948 planned production of about 400 tons of nickel.

Magnesite is an exceptionally important raw material for Poland. Electrolytic magnesium, being one of the lightest metals, is capable of very wide application. Magnesite, roasted at 1,500-1,700 degrees centigrade, yields unsurpassed refractory material used for lining blast furnaces, etc. In Poland, it is to be found exclusively in Dolny Slask at the foot of the Sobotka Mountain and near Sabkowice in Grochow, Kojancin, Tarnow, and Tapadlo. Prewar magnesite mining was well developed, yielding about 40,000 tons annually. This is far more than Poland's domestic requirements and permits considerable exports abroad.

The Dolny Slask deposits of arsenic ore in Rowno are likewise the only ones in Poland. The arsenic content averages about 7 percent, with 3-5 grams of gold per ton of ore. Arsenic produced in Rowno is an important raw material for the chemical and dye industry. Both the mine and the related metallurgical plant are operating full blast and produce far more than under German rule. Whereas, during peak activity the Germans produced 2,000 tons of arsenic compounds and 50-60 kilograms of gold, present plans call for the production of 3,000 tons of arsenic compounds and 100 kilograms of gold annually.

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As for pyrites used for the production of sulfuric acid, these are found in the Bytom area along with zinc-lead ores, and separately in Ronow, Kamienna Gora Powiat in the Sudetens. Together with the Swietokrzyje pyrites, they cover the major part of Polish requirements, reducing imports from abroad to a minimum.

In the Dolny Slask coal basin, there are also deposits of barite and refractory slate. Barite is obtained in Boza Gora near Walbrzych in quantities of about 6,000 tons annually, which is sufficient for domestic requirements. The Nowa Ruda quarry near Klodzka is the only one in Poland for refractory slate. After roasting, this is an irreplaceable raw material for lining for iron, zinc, lead and glass furnaces. Annual production is about 100,000 tons of slate and over 60,000 tons of finished product. Before the war, Poland imported this raw material. Now a large surplus is available for export to Sweden, Norway, and Italy, former customers of Dolny Slask.

Building materials constitute a rich and varied group of resources in the Regained Territories. They contain sand, granite, basalt, porphyry, diabase, andesite, melaphyre, limestone, marble, quartz, and clays, including fireclay, gypsum, and kaolin, to mention only a few. Some, like granite, basalt, and kaolin, are not available elsewhere in Poland.

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