

Europe braces for more cold weather as Siberian cold front marches south

By Linda Catoe
STAFF WRITER

With hundreds dead, lines of transport cut off and fuel supplies rationed, the whole of Europe is at war — with the weather. Since the end of January, the cold front has claimed over 500 lives in Europe; the Weather Underground rates it as Europe's coldest outbreak since at least 1991.

By contrast, the U.S. is experiencing above average winter temperatures.

Last week, Mike Halpert with the National Weather Service said the mild winter is caused by something called the "Arctic oscillation," which moves the jet stream north and south. Acting as a dividing line between cold and warm air, the jet stream keeps colder air to the North and warmer air to the South. Milder than usual U.S. temperatures will likely continue as long as the jet stream stays north of its normal position, Halpert explained.

However, this is not the case with Europe.

"In Europe, the jet stream has dipped far to the South, allowing frigid arctic air to pour across the continent, subjecting Europe to its deepest freeze in decades," said Halpert, according to BBC. "More than 400 people have died. In Hungary they're burning bricks of shredded money to stay warm. Homes in Poland are frozen solid."

The extreme temperatures are having their most deadly effects in poorer European countries. Ukraine, the second poorest country in Europe, remains the hardest hit with over 135 fatalities. Most of Ukraine's dead were homeless people who froze to death as temperatures dropped below minus 30 degrees Celsius, or minus 22 degrees Fahrenheit.

Declaring a state of emergency, Ukraine officials set up heated relief tents to house the homeless and prevent further

fatalities, according to BBC.

As rivers freeze and dams and water pipes burst, bizarre conditions all over Europe are becoming the norm.

The Croatian city of Split saw a spike in bone fractures in recent days as hundreds of people slipped on icy roads, according to AFP. Struggling to keep up with the injuries, Split's hospital ran through a two-year supply of plaster for splints and casts in just five days.

Mayor Zeljko Kerum enraged Split's residents when he failed to manage the crisis as he was out of country on a private business trip. Kerum fueled Split's outrage further when he suggested that high taxes on footwear explained why residents couldn't afford proper winter boots.

Elsewhere, in Poland, Prime Minister Donald Tusk asked local authorities to waive the ban on the admission of inebriated individuals to homeless shelters as the national death toll rose to 53, Polish Press Agency reported. Perhaps one of the more wide-reaching effects of the cold front is the paralyzing effect it has had on water transportation.

Sections of the Danube River's 1780 miles from Austria to its mouth on the Black Sea are frozen solid and partially iced over. While specialized boats attempt to break up the ice, the ten countries whose economies depend on the Danube remain crippled.

There are a few countries that are faring better than others, however.

Some, like Zoltan David, a New York City Cinematographer and Budapest-native, felt that the cold front presented little more than an inconvenience.

"You know, the usual things like very slow traffic because Budapest got around two feet of snow," David said to the Guilfordian. "Delays everywhere, shortage of fresh food supplies, higher heating costs."

While Hungary didn't feel the impact of the cold weather as much as neighboring countries did, schools and businesses were still shut down due to the snow. Since buildings in Hungary and most Eastern European countries are made of brick and concrete with no insulation, they are under-heated in the severe cold, David explained.

David goes on to say that the Russians shutting down the natural gas pipelines was the biggest problem for Hungarians, as Russia is the number one gas exporter in Europe.

"Anytime a natural catastrophe strikes, the poor, the old and sick people suffer the most," said David. "I believe this was the case here, too."

He also emphasized Europe's troubled financial and economic conditions, highlighting the invisible role that it has played in the devastation of the cold front.

"In any well-functioning society, it is much easier to overcome a natural disaster, but Europe is in turmoil," David said.

As the deadly Siberian cold front continues to wreak havoc on Europe, meteorologists contend that relief from sub-zero temperatures may not arrive until the end of February. In fact, Steven Keates, a weather forecaster at Britain's Met Office, said the severe wintry conditions were expected to spread to other areas.

"It will still be very cold — maybe not quite the exceptional temperatures we've seen this last week — but still very cold," said Keates to Reuters.

And for those skeptics who say: "Take that Al Gore and your global warming theories," they might consider freezing that thought, according to David.

"(The) last thing I would mention is the global climate changing," he said. "Winter in Europe has warmed up significantly in the last 20 years, therefore the population is not used to the severe cold temperatures anymore."

Egyptian soccer riots kill 74

By Thomas Deane
STAFF WRITER

Violence erupted last week after a soccer match in the Egyptian city of Port Said. The deadly riot killed 74 and injured scores of others in what was the bloodiest day the sport has seen in 15 years.

The match took place between Al-Masry and Al-Ahly. After Al-Masry pulled out a surprise 3-1 win, fans stormed the field looking to get a piece of the Al-Ahly fans.

The two teams are longtime rivals, but what happened on the pitch reflects the bloodshed seen in the Arab nation over the past year. The country is still reeling from a popular uprising that saw the overthrow of long-time dictator Hosni Mubarak.

Many fans present at the riots noted the police did not do enough to help quell the violence. Strong political undertones have also been brought up as a major instigator to the riots. Many Egyptians have accused the police of letting the riots happen out of vengeance towards the Ultras — die-hard soccer fans who are bitter enemies of the police and have been among the most aggressive protestors over the last year.

The recent soccer riots were not an isolated event; in fact, just last year Masry fans attacked Ahly supporters at a soccer match. This month's attacks at the stadium, however, were by far the most violent to occur in over a decade.

Al-Ahly supporter Amr Khamis had his head bandaged after being attacked by an Al-Masry supporter. In an interview with CNN, Khamis criticized the police for their roles in the attacks.

"The police opened the gates separating us from the Masry fans and their hooligans attack(ed) us with everything: rocks, glass bottles, knives, swords," said Khamis. "Some had guns. ... How did the police allow them with these weapons into the bleachers?"

The Ultras are some of the most influential

supporters of the club Al-Ahly, and over the past year they have been in constant conflict with the police and, more recently, with the army. Over the past year the Ultras have fought to put an end to military rule, in both the streets and the stadiums.

After the riots at the soccer match, an emergency meeting was called by Parliament. Prime Minister Kamal el-Ganzouri immediately dissolved the Egyptian soccer federation's board. He has called for their prosecution following the violence that erupted in the coastal city.

Soccer has long been entangled with politics in many countries around the world. Jeff Bateson, Guilford men's soccer head coach, notes that the history of soccer is much deeper in other countries than it is here in the U.S.

"There is a lot of politics in it, and I would assume since Egypt is so politically charged at the moment that politics had a lot to do with it (the riot)," Bateson said.

The violence and tumult that has characterized much of Egypt's recent political climate was reflected clearly in the events at the soccer match. Throughout the match rocks and bottles were thrown at the players. Tensions skyrocketed throughout the game as more and more fans banded together.

"There were organized groups in the crowds that purposely provoked the police all through the match and escalated the violence and stormed onto the field after the final whistle," said General Marwan Mustapha of Egypt's interior ministry in an interview with ABC News. "Our policemen tried to contain them but not engage."

The Ultras have been considered the main instigators of the incident. Following the soccer riot, they are expected to increase in numbers and continue the "revolution." As for now, the country hopes to push forward and recover from these tumultuous times. But with so many opposing forces in one country, peace may be hard to come by.

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