

Mining Town Stunned By Blast; Death Toll Is 8

St. Clair, Pa., April 28.—(P)—This little mining town in the heart of Pennsylvania's anthracite region lay stunned today by the greatest tragedy in its history—a mine explosion that killed eight men and injured 10 others.

Tight-lipped miners stood on street corners with bowed heads as widows and fatherless children arranged funerals for the men killed yesterday in the blast that rocked the St. Clair Coal Company's mine.

It was the nation's second major mine disaster in less than a week. Nearly half a hundred died in an explosion in a bituminous mine at Grundy, Va., last week.

The injured, burned so badly that physicians said three may die, were unable to tell exactly what happened.

"All of a sudden," Adam Hernotak said from his hospital bed, "a big hole opened in the ground."

"Gas came up and boom. A big explosion, a big sheet of flame then another big sheet or flame curling back."

Rescue squads, fighting through "black-damp," came first upon the body of Frank Montgomery, 30, one of the 600 miners working in the mine.

Then they reached the others—some dead, some burned.

Death List

The other dead: Paul Sikra, 40, Wasil Holovak, 46, and Luke Church-ran, 40, all of St. Clair, and Michael and John Terris, brothers, of Port Clinton; Andrew Potts, 36, of St. Clair; Richard Barnes, 43, St. Clair.

"It was terrible," said Peter Homa, a motor operator.

"There was a deafening explosion," he said. "I was thrown to the floor of the slope. Joseph Stepanoski, who was with me was also thrown to the ground. We

knew something had happened. We signalled the engineer at the top and were hoisted to the surface. Then we gave the alarm."

Stepanoski was uninjured.

Walter Zelinsky, another worker, said "there were two distinct explosions."

"We had just started to work when the first came. It was light and we continued working. Then came the second blast. It struck with such force we were hurled from our feet."

James Grace, of Minersville, a State mining inspector, said that "while I am satisfied from evidence gathered that the disaster is the result of a gas explosion, I have no detailed statement to make until the injured are well enough to be questioned."

Officials of the company declined to comment on the explosion pending a complete investigation.

A score of men were working in the slope, 600 feet underground, when the blast let go.

The entrance through which the men entered the mine was blocked compelling rescue workers to carry the dead and injured more than a mile through gangways to the mouth of an emergency slope.

Saved By Alarm Clock

Pottsville, Pa., April 28.—(P)—Prokop Stednitz, a miner at the St. Clair Coal Company's anthracite workings, treasured today the alarm clock he wanted to junk yesterday.

The alarm failed to go off and Stednitz awoke too late to report for work. As he fumed over the "faithless" time-piece he received news of the explosion which killed eight of his buddies in the tunnel where he worked.