

and the outer air, which appears to be icy, even in summer.

And in this hell little boys still work; quite undeveloped and underfed children are working under the merciless drive of piece-work rates. The lowest legal age is fifteen, and all the little boys you question are fifteen or even sixteen years old. And in the register kept in the office up above, you will not find any workers under the legal age. Certainly not! When the labor inspector descends the mine, solemnly conducted by the owner—though often enough he finds it more convenient not to go down at all, for it stinks frightfully—there are only adult men to bid him a respectful good-day. There are plenty of passages in the mines where a few dozen boys can disappear for an hour. At the present time there are about 150 mines being worked in Sicily, and about fifteen thousand sulphur miners are supposed to be employed in them. How many of these are children it is hard to discover. Thirteen hundred workers were employed in the mine I visited, and five hundred of these were “juveniles”—the official designation.

What do they earn here? “According to the work they perform,” was the reply given by one of the engineers. “Five to six lire per day,” said one of the boys. “Eleven lire,” said an adult worker.

In the office I asked the bookkeeper about the deductions from wages. He took as a basis the “standard” wage of fourteen lire per day. The following amounts are deducted daily from this sum:

Disability insurance	0.15
Family allowance	1.04
Trade union	0.04
Winter relief work	0.10

Total 1.33

This amounts to approximately 10 percent of the wages.

This applies so long as they have work. But since the World War Italian sulphur production has declined steadily, especially the sulphur production of Sicily. The American product has already driven the Italian from all European markets. And then the natural conditions in Sicily are disadvantageous, and the technical equipment lags far behind the times. Before the World War the Sicilian sulphur mines had an annual output of about 325,000 tons, or seven-eighths of the total Italian output. The latest official figures available—from 1933—show the output to have dropped to 265,117 tons, or two-thirds of the total production. A scanty 150 mines of the former three hundred are still working. Unemployment is widespread, and there is no prospect that it will diminish. Unemployment benefit is given only to those who have been in full work for at least six months. If the work stops only a few days before the six months are full, the dismissed worker receives nothing. And even if he may count himself among the “fortunate” ones who can fetch their three lire daily, this good fortune lasts only ninety days—three months. Then the unemployed man is struck from the list of

those entitled to benefit and disappears from the unemployment statistics. A common case is the following, told me by a sulphur worker:

“Ten months ago I and a dozen fellow workers were discharged. The ‘chief’ was very nice to us, and promised that the dismissal was only temporary. In six to eight weeks at most we should have work again; until then we should hold ourselves in ‘reserve,’ and on no account report ourselves as unemployed. Perhaps he believed this himself—perhaps not—in any case the result was that we did not report as unemployed within the legal term, and now we have no work and no unemployment benefit!”

The fascist totalitarian state presents a deceptively plausible façade. But it suffices to take a real look on the spot.

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“DER TAG”

THE military situation in the Danube Valley has, within the past six days, become very much worse than the Nazi authorities have permitted the British correspondents and hence the British public to imagine. From three informants—two of whom bear names which are familiar and famous in military circles, and the third whose name is known to very few people indeed, for reasons which are obvious—the *Week* has secured the following report on developments which by mid-August may be front-page headlines in a terrified press.

The Austrian end of the Vienna-Prague railway is under military control. Control was assumed on Monday last. On Thursday, freighters were informed that no trucks were available for civilian freight “for the time being.” Big freighters on Monday morning were informed on inquiry that “no trucks are available for ten days.”

War material, brought into Austria on the Passau-Linz-Vienna line during the past three weeks is being pushed up the Bratislava, Mistelbach, and Korneuburg-Stockerau-Hollabrunn lines to points between Vienna and the frontier.

So far as possible, the great mass of war material being shifted in the last week has been routed round Vienna—mostly southward by road. The Wienerwald is full of it.

Tanks, heavy artillery, anti-aircraft batteries, and motorized transport on a large scale is on the move, or awaiting further movement. A very large part of the material has been taken down to Wiener Neustadt, with portions of it distributed in the villages and small towns on, and east and west of, the Vienna-Wiener Neustadt road and railway.

Moedling and Baden-bei-Wien are packed with troops (eye-witnessed). Anti-aircraft batteries are concentrated at points the whole length of the Helenenthal.

Work on new fortifications—defensive—and offensive airdromes is being carried on by mixed labor corps—composed partly of the

local peasantry, partly of unemployed Viennese conscripted for it.

The labor day is fourteen hours.

At Gmund, almost the nearest point of the old Austrian frontier to Prague, peasants have been turned off the land over large areas for the purpose of fortification construction.

Near Laxenburg houses are being demolished at great speed and preparations for construction of underground hangars are far advanced.

Underground airdromes have also been visited by the compilers of this report at Linz and Wels.

Information—first-hand but, as in all such cases, not absolutely reliable—from Nazi officials suggests that August 15 is the date they have been given as the moment when the “big push” will start.

(Note by Editor: This checks with information in the possession of the British Embassy in Paris which four days ago reported August 10-15 as the period within which General Staff and Nazi Party discussions suggested the “push.”)

German Nazis in Austria are concentrating on a campaign to raise *Stimmung* against Czechoslovakia. They (bearing out our report of last week on the motives for the new Nazi intransigence) state: “We shall flick away the Czechs like flies with a damp towel” (this phrase is used so often it is evidently a “central directive” distributed to the propagandists).

A popular line is the following—bruted carefully around the country pubs and market places: “Chamberlain is with us now and will soon deprive the French of the dominion status they now enjoy” (pause for peasant laughter).

There is nothing to suggest that the Nazis can rely on the support of the Austrian population in the event of war. It is not exaggerated to say that the Western powers can count on very considerable assistance behind the German lines in Austria.

Apart from the serious manifestations of organized wage movements, distribution of the Communist newspaper, etc., observers in the factories report anti-Prussian feeling exhibiting itself in the smallest details of daily life. On the day after the Louis-Schmeling fight—after Nazi radios had ballyhooed Schmeling and impending victory as a politico-racial affair—workingmen meeting in the Vienna workshops gave the obligatory Hitler salute and whispered “Heil Louis.”—THE WEEK, July 20.

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355,900,000 COPIES

EDITIONS of works by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin in the Soviet Union are increasing year by year. Altogether, in twenty years, the USSR published 355,900,000 individual books and pamphlets in eighty-five different languages, by these four men. The figure for 1937 alone is 49,000,000.

Readers' Forum

For a Health Program

TO NEW MASSES: Your editorial "For a Health Program" [July 26] contains a misstatement of fact: "... while scientific progress has made possible the control of various diseases, there has been no proportionate reduction in needless suffering and unnecessary loss of life."

Without questioning the inadequacy of the medical care available to a large section of the population, the lack of hospital facilities, etc., on which we see eye to eye, I invite you to compare the number of deaths from diphtheria in New York City last week with that of the same week thirty years ago. Similar gains may be cited in the maternal and neo-natal death rates, the incidence of blindness due to ophthalmia neonatorum, cerebrospinal meningitis, smallpox, tuberculosis, and a host of other onetime devastating scourges now brought under control and in some cases practically eradicated by our admittedly inadequate public health services. These facts are well known to the most superficially informed laymen. To deny them, as you do, must injure your otherwise unexceptionable statement in the eyes of those who still have to be convinced.

That there is room for further progress, even Morris Fishbein will agree. That greater progress could be made under another social system is not susceptible of proof. Our Scandinavian contemporaries have done pretty well within the framework of this thoroughly discredited and decrepit one.

New York City. ABRAHAM SEAMOR, M. D.

The Editors Reply

THE editorial referred to by Dr. Seamor did not deny that gains had been made in reducing needless suffering and unnecessary loss of life. It did insist, however, as Dr. Seamor's own quotation shows, that this reduction has not been *proportionate* to the rate of scientific progress. There is abundant proof for this statement. Paul de Kruif's recently published *The Fight for Life* points out, for example, that even though a simple cure has been devised for pellagra, this disease "killed at least three thousand citizens, black and white," in 1935, which is the last year of record. Dr. Seamor cites the decrease in maternal death rates. But de Kruif shows that more than fifteen thousand mothers die in this country with childbirth the direct cause of their death; hundreds of thousands of mothers are incapacitated; more than 85,000 babies die while being born. This loss, according to Dr. Sigerist of the Johns Hopkins University, is entirely unnecessary. It is due to the fact that "maternity hospitals are expensive." Moreover, "it costs money to train competent obstetricians and many of them could not make a living under the present competitive system." While there has been a notable reduction in the tuberculosis death-rate, to take another example, it is still one of the most frequent causes of death, especially of younger people. We have it on high medical authority that "Slum clearance, the creation of decent living and working conditions, would soon eliminate tuberculosis." Dr. de Kruif's book examines many such instances where the rate of social progress has lagged far behind the rate of scientific progress in medical care.

It is just because of this lag that the fight for a national health program takes on such significance today. We have not begun to take advantage of scientific progress.

Dr. Seamor adds that nobody can prove that more progress could be made under another social system. We invite him to read Dr. Sigerist's *Socialized Medicine in the Soviet Union*. But the point to be made here is that even under capitalism much greater progress can be made. If we did not believe this, we would not support the President's national health program, which is an important step in the right direction. Recent studies by government technicians reveal that the 40,000,000 persons in this country in families with annual incomes under \$800 cannot pay for medical care. At least half the present toll of mothers' deaths in child-bearing are preventable with proper prenatal care and medical services in delivery. The anti-monopoly report of the Assistant Attorney General states that the enormous difference in the mortality records of low-income and high-income families "is *prima facie* evidence that the medical profession, as it is now organized, is not providing them with adequate care." We are convinced that two steps are necessary to ensure progress in medical care: First, securing a higher standard of living for the American family. Second, reorganization of the medical profession to provide medical care for the entire population.

THE EDITORS.

The Aryanized Axis

TO NEW MASSES: Apropos of your editorial in this week's issue about the Aryanization of the fascist axis, you might be interested in a conversation I had with a young Japanese about a year ago. He had been sent over to the Peiping Japanese Embassy soon after the Liukouchiao incident because he spoke excellent German and English. He was a part of a special corps organized to control the press, keep us satisfied and without facts. He had not long before returned from Germany, and I was talking with him about the life there. Oh, yes, he had attended the University of Munich and had been given a bachelor's degree.

"But," I expostulated, "I thought that due to their race theories they didn't give degrees to foreigners." I may even have used the term non-Aryan.

"You don't understand," he replied in that hurt seriousness that many Japanese display. "It's true—they don't. But you see we Japanese are very much respected by the Germans. In the matter of university degrees, they consider us honorary Germans, yes, 'honorary Aryans,' if you like."

So much for high-flown race theories. They seem to be extremely subservient to politics.

Six years ago I spent an extended summer in Italy, and I happened to know well several Italian Jewish intellectuals. They and their friends discussed the subject of the Jew in Italy quite freely, and they assured me that there was no Jewish problem or situation in the country. In the first place, they explained, Italy had very few Jews and there was therefore nothing to be anti-Semitic about. And what few Jews there were were so intermarried with Italians (and around Trieste with Austrians) that no one knew who was a Jew and who wasn't.

That Mussolini has found it necessary to play up a "Jewish bogey" seems to me far more significant than mere imitation of what is fast becoming his big brother to the north. There are few people today who do not realize that mass persecutions are little more than attempts to divert attention from economic and social ills. And perhaps this campaign in Italy is a better indication of the

country's situation, at home and in Abyssinia and Spain, than all the fixed-up balance sheets that Mussolini has given his public and the world at large. He must be in a bad situation indeed, he must already have run a complete gamut of the tricks of diversion and scapegoating to be trying this one, successful perhaps in pre-revolutionary Russia, and in modern Germany and Austria, but certainly not applicable to his own country.

Winsted, Conn.

ROBERT M. MACGREGOR.

Goon Squad Raids

TO NEW MASSES: We were upstairs at the Communist Party waterfront headquarters when the first crash sounded. Running down, we were just in time to see five men leave the building. They had wrecked the hall, throwing chairs against the wall, overturning desks, smashing typewriters, and had left the few surprised people who had been sitting in the hall with bruises and aching heads.

That is the way the group which has organized against the progressives in the National Maritime Union work. They want it to appear that they are only out after the Communists. In reality, they had just come from the same sort of a raid on the NMU headquarters about two blocks away.

It is well known who sent the band. "Goon" Kelly was among them, and Kelly has been active in the phony "rank-and-file" group which has been doing the dirty work for the shipowners-Joseph P. Ryan coalition. Ryan has ordered his strong-arm squad to wreck CP offices on other occasions.

There is a cure for this sort of violence. Progressives can help militant unionists in their fight against goon squads by writing District Attorney Dewey and demanding an immediate investigation of the terrorism on the West Side of New York City, and especially of the waterfront strong-arm squads.

New York City.

PHYLLIS GREEN.

Father O'Flanagan in Flint

TO NEW MASSES: Two or three hundred daring souls of Flint, Mich., were honored in hearing Father Michael O'Flanagan on his short visit to the United States in behalf of the duly elected government of Spain.

This group, which makes a particular effort to bring liberal thinkers of international repute—men who speak to many thousands in other cities—is most appreciative of such men.

The local audience for Father O'Flanagan should have numbered thousands; however, pressure had been put on certain groups to boycott the meeting; they were told that he had been an "unfrocked" priest for fifteen years.

Father O'Flanagan readily admits three suspensions because of activities for the Irish republic; his last reinstatement was in 1927; three reinstatements speak volumes for his value to his church, to which he has been restored for the past eleven years.

The film *Blockade* has thus far been blocked to Flint audiences. It just happened that Father O'Flanagan saw the picture on the liner coming over; he tells us that the picture is just what it intends, a scathing indictment of civilian bombings, and recommended that we all see it.

The good Father advised Catholics, as well as Protestants, to accept their faith from their church, but not to allow "presumptuous" teachers to warp their own good judgment in what is right or wrong in political and social problems and urged that we defend what is right, even if it does appear "left."

One of the audience remarked: "How all religious bitterness melt in the warmth of that man's spirit."

Flint, Mich.

C. C. PROBERT, M.D.,
Flint Committee to
Aid Spanish Democracy.