NUTRITION

Starvation Breeds Unrest

Underfed people of Europe are in danger of civil unrest. Hungry children cannot learn to be good world citizens on empty stomachs.

➤ A POPULATION getting less than 1,900 calories per person is in danger of civil unrest, Dr. Arnold P. Meiklejohn, senior consultant in nutrition in the UNRRA European Regional Office, declared at a conference in Washington.

He cited 16 hunger strikes and some hunger marches that occurred in Austria last spring before UNRRA supplies began to flow into that country. Observations of underfed people in Europe and of conscientious objectors who were the guinea pigs for famine studies at the University of Minnesota both show that people on short rations are affected mentally as well as physically. Irritability, apathy and sensitivity to noise are among the effects noted.

Underfed children fail to grow normally. Even worse, from the standpoint of future world understanding and peace, they fail to learn. Many children in Europe today are going to school without breakfast, Dr. Meiklejohn reported. "It is hard to learn on an empty belly," he commented.

Relief shipments of grain should be wheat, not corn, unless dried milk or some kind of milk product can also be made available. This, he explained, is because of the danger of pellagra developing among people living on a corn diet. Milk supplies the pellagra-preventing vitamin and so does wheat if the wheat is not milled in a way to remove the vitamin.

Except for rickets in children, for which cod liver oil is needed, there has been little or no vitamin deficiency disease in Europe. Major epidemics have not occurred, but the tuberculosis death rate is twice what it was before the war.

Infant mortality is also well above prewar levels. In some regions of Poland and Yugoslavia, one out of every three children born died during the first year of life. Overcrowding, lack of sanitation, and fatigue and underfeeding of the mothers is responsible.

The reason postwar health conditions have been no worse, Dr. Meiklejohn said, is that enormous quantities of UNRRA food went into Europe. This food averted major famines in Greece, Yugoslavia and Austria.

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PHOTOGRAPHY

Matchbox Camera For OSS

➤ TINY CAMERAS, small enough to hold in the palm of a person's hand or to be disguised as match boxes, were used by the OSS and underground forces during World War II.

The story of the matchbox camera, and the vestpocket darkroom which was used with it, have been revealed by the Eastman Kodak Company, which made 1,000 of the cameras in a secret, wartime project.

Pictures about one-half inch square were snapped with the tiny cameras for intelligence use and to supply pictures for various "resistance" newspapers. Film was developed in a small glass holding a jigger of solution. Complete equipment for processing the films was contained in a pocket-size darkroom outfit which had rolls of 16 mm. film, photo chemicals in pill form and other items needed for developing the small film.

Designated "M. B.", the camera could hold two-foot coils or spools of film with about 30 exposures each. The lens was f.5 with one stop to shut the aperture to f.11, and the shutter speed was about one-fiftieth of a second.

With the subject in focus from about eight feet to infinity, the camera permitted "shooting from the hip" and had no view finder. It was operated by pushing a small plunger, which produced a slight click. Time exposures could be made using a wire lever.

Focal length of the lens was one inch and the angle of view approximately 45 degrees. A small stand and close-up lens permitted the camera to be used for copying photographs or printed matter.

The midget camera had a molded bakelite inner case sheathed in a dull black metal outer case. Plans for the camera began in 1943 and 500 were delivered in 1944, followed by an additional order of 500.

MATCHBOX CAMERA—This tiny camera could be concealed and used easily. Eastman Kodak Company built 1,000 of these for use by OSS agents and underground forces.

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MEDICINE

New Method Detects Pollen That Starts Asthma Attacks

➤ A NEW WAY of detecting the particular pollen that brings on an asthma attack in a sensitive person has been developed by Drs. Francis C. Lowell and Irving W. Schiller of Massachusetts Memorial Hospitals and Boston University School of Medicine.

Instead of injecting or scratching the pollen solution into the skin, these doctors have their patients inhale an aerosol, or very fine mist, of the suspected pollen. Before and after measurements are made of the patient's vital capacity, that is, the number of cubic inches of air he can forcibly expel from his lungs after taking a deep breath.

The vital capacity was reduced to as much as 60% of its pre-test value when the patient inhaled an aerosol containing an extract of the pollen that caused his asthmatic attacks. The reduction occurred usually within six to ten minutes and the vital capacity returned to the pre-test value within 50 minutes.

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