

Do You Know?

Brazil has begun the manufacture of *glass* for domestic needs.

The *cuma* is a large knife used extensively in crop cultivation in Salvador.

Books in the English language are in demand in Sweden.

Calcium in the soil is the most important element in influencing the development and growth of peanuts.

Soot-clogged *chimneys* are a serious fire hazard when the first hot furnace fires are started in the fall.

Liberal amounts of *vitamin A* tend to postpone aging and prolong life, certain scientists now say; their tests were made on rats.

Tin was discovered in Yunnan, China, over 2,000 years ago but commercial mining was not begun until about 1,000 A.D.

Grain found in vases in ancient tombs is practically carbonized from age and will not sprout, in spite of numerous stories to the contrary.

Cornstarch ordinarily consists of two fractions, amylose and amylopectin, but a new variety of corn has been developed in which the starch is all amylopectin; it is a waxy maize and can be used as a substitute for tapioca.

Automobile *tires* built with rayon instead of cotton provide considerably greater wear because the rayon, although lighter, is stronger, and generates less heat because it creates less friction in flexing.

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GENERAL SCIENCE

ORG War Workers

Chemists, physicists, mathematicians and other scientists did their fighting with test-tubes, oscilloscopes, slide-rules and brains.

► WARTIME work of a scientific "silent service" in the Navy, more silent even than the submarines, has been partially disclosed. Chemists, physicists, mathematicians and other scientists of the Operations Research Group ("ORG" for short) did their fighting with test-tubes, oscilloscopes, slide-rules, many other kinds of scientific apparatus; but their chief weapons were their brains.

Their task was not so much the development of new weapons and ways of warfare—this was done by other groups of scientists—as the analysis of the tactics of using our new and secret weapons and the devising of countermeasures when our enemies sprang disagreeable new surprises.

Seventy-three scientists were recruited for ORG from a score or more of colleges, universities and research institutions, from the statistical departments of several insurance companies, from a few industrial firms, from government research laboratories, as well as from the Army and the Navy. Headquarters were in Washington, under the leadership of Prof. Philip M. Morse of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. However, the tasks of ORG were far from being exclusively swivel-chair assignments. ORG men went out into the combat areas to check up on their own work. They flew in planes over enemy waters, they went on missions in submarines, they cruised in carriers that were attacked by Kamikaze flyers.

Some of the accomplishments of ORG, as listed by the Navy:

Trapping German submarines that were slipping into the Mediterranean through the Strait of Gibraltar.

Stopping German blockade runners carrying rubber, tin and other desperately needed war materials from Japan.

Devising an effective countermeasure to the deadly German acoustic homing torpedo, on which the Nazis had pinned their last hopes of winning the Battle of the Atlantic.

Drawing up a set of tables to enable anti-submarine craft to track down enemy submarines, even after hours of apparent escape.

Finding the "thin spots" in Japanese anti-aircraft defense, enabling our bomb-

ers to get in and attack with minimum losses.

Solving enemy methods of attack on our own submarines, thus cutting down our losses and increasing effectiveness of our attack.

The services of the Operations Research Group were furnished to the Navy by the Office of Scientific Research and Development, at first through a contract between Division 6 of the National Defense Research Committee and Columbia University, later through the Office of Field Service.

Institutions and organizations from which ORG drew scientific staff members were: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Columbia, Harvard, Stanford, Northwestern, Notre Dame, McGill, Case, Antioch, Lawrence, Purdue, Kent, Iowa State; the Universities of California, Washington, Missouri, Michigan, Tennessee, and Oklahoma; the Rockefeller and Carnegie Institutes and the Institute of Gas Technology; the New York Public Library, the Equitable, Metropolitan, John Hancock, Sun Life, Union Labor Life, and Massachusetts Indemnity Insurance Companies; the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company, L. Bomberger and Company, and the American Thermos Bottle Company; the Insurance Department of Oregon; the State Department; National Bureau of Standards; Federal Communications Commission; the Army and the Navy.

Science News Letter, December 8, 1945

NUTRITION

Baked Potatoes Should Be Served at Once

► BAKED POTATOES should be served as soon as they are done, if you are to get the full benefit of their vitamin C. Potatoes that stood in the kitchen for half an hour after baking lost a third of their vitamin C, tests at the Illinois and Idaho Agricultural Experiment Stations indicate. Those that stood an hour lost 50%. All of the vitamin C was lost from baked potatoes allowed to stand for four hours.

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