consideration. Life in camps and special installations should be arranged to give refugees the nearest approximation to a normal family life: every effort should be made to avoid institutional conditions, with the abnormal and dependent attitude that they imply, which perpetuate the pathological emotional state of the refugee.

Refugees have existed as long as the human race, but only recently has the human conscience evolved to the state of considering refugees a responsibility of mankind as a whole. This international organization was founded on grounds of expediency, and nothing of its scope had existed before. The work of the organization was (and is) a great physical success in caring for and resettling so many people under so many difficulties. However, that this work can be nullified if the psychological aspect does not receive full consideration is exemplified by the following press cutting from an American newspaper: "A 42-years-old refugee from Lithuania who had been over six months in New Orleans was found, having hung himself yesterday, after hearing a radio programme in which he believed he heard his name mentioned as going to be deported as a spy. Mrs. Y, his kindly sponsor, commented that she was never able to make him believe that he was in a free country."

Summary

Observations made over 18 months on a refugee population of 30,000 in Austria are recorded.

Although the population under consideration consisted of people of every age group and many nationalities, various creeds, and different professional, social, and economic status, their situation reduced them to a common plight with similar mental reactions.

The symptoms of more typical reactive or conversion neurosis were not found in this large population.

A form of neurosis widespread among the refugees is described. The symptoms are those of emotional shock persisting for years, with suppression of active and aggressive psychic qualities, lack of volition, and emotional incapacity to consider the future. There is positive resistance to change even though the present may be most insecure, uncomfortable, and completely different from the previous pattern of life.

The physical care of these refugees was good, and the physical necessity of emigrating them to new countries was dealt with energetically and with considerable success.

A primary object, when such situations have to be dealt with in the future, should be to aim at restoring the refugees to mental health as a first consideration, so that each regains the fullest vigour of his ethnic and individual capacities for dealing with the new situation and environment that he has to face. The capacity for adjustment to a new situation in which the individual is placed is a criterion of his mental health for community living. To restore to the refugee the fullest enjoyment of that capacity should therefore be a prominent aspect of the work of an organization caring for refugees, and, if successful, would enormously decrease the amount of purely supportive work that has to be done.

The Board of the Institute of Physics announces that the Institute's Certificate in Laboratory Arts will not be awarded after 1951 in view of the establishment of the Intermediate Certificate for Laboratory Technicians by the City and Guilds of London Institute. This institute has agreed that holders of the Institute of Physics Certificate shall be eligible to enter, should they so wish, the course for the Advanced Laboratory Technicians Certificate, which is to be established shortly, on the same terms as those who have passed examinations for the new Intermediate Certificate. Students who have already begun courses for the Institute of Physics Certificate will be able to complete these by 1951, after which the Institute of Physics will no longer examine in Laboratory Arts.

A MEDICAL STUDENT IN PRAGUE

BY

P. L. C. DIGGORY

President of the British Medical Students Association

Since few people can nowadays penetrate the Iron Curtain it is possible that even the personal and general impressions gained by a medical student observer to the World Student Congress, held in Prague in the second half of August, will be of interest to readers of the *Journal*. In Communist countries it appears impossible to divorce medicine from political life, and it will therefore be necessary to outline something of the Congress and of the political atmosphere prevailing before dealing with specifically medical questions.

Importance of Youth Movement

In Eastern European countries the youth movements and the student body as a whole have very much more importance than is granted to them in Great Britain. Mass youth rallies have come to form a normal part of the political life of "The Peoples' Democracies," and during the last 12 months Budapest, Sofia, East Berlin, and Prague have each been the scene of such a gathering. The recent Student Congress in Prague was the result of very extensive preparations, and must have been heavily subsidized by the Czechoslovakian State.

On arrival at Prague airport we were met by a small committee of welcome, and every student was presented with a bouquet of flowers; we were then whisked through the customs and taken by special bus direct to the Congress headquarters. *En route* we could not fail to notice the immense scale of the preparations; the streets were decorated and every shop displayed posters of welcome. Even the buses and trams carried slogans in honour of the Congress.

Giant portraits of Stalin smiled down at us from many public buildings, but it is difficult to know whether these were specially erected for the Congress or whether they now form a part of the normal street decorations.

The facilities provided for delegates in Prague were excellent. We were accommodated in large student hostels, and extremely efficient arrangements were made for the provision of food, easy travel, and free entertainment. It is typical that a whole fleet of buses had been diverted from their normal duties in the city and placed at our disposal.

During our stay we were to come to realize the privileged position of students in Czechoslovakia, all of them receiving a generous Government grant. In addition they are provided with accommodation in student hostels at extremely cheap rates. They are allowed to use workers' canteens and are able to travel on all forms of transport at greatly reduced fares. The president of the Czechoslovakian National Union of Students is *ex officio* a member of the Czech Parliament.

It will be realized that these privileges are not attained without sacrifice. To gain admission to a university in Czechoslovakia a student requires recommendations regarding his "reliability." The very fact that all students receive a grant from the State makes it possible for the Government, by withdrawing this grant at any time, to dismiss individual students. All faculties of the universities include in their curricula the compulsory study of political science: for 12 months every medical student must study this subject, and in his final examinations he sits a compulsory paper.

The whole system of education in Czechoslovakia has been remoulded since the Communists came into power. Political education is now an intrinsic part of the curriculum in even the most elementary schools. The young school-children first join the pioneer movement, which closely resembles the *Hitlerjugend*. A uniformed contingent of this organization paraded before the Congress, and a little boy of about 10 made a speech of welcome devoted largely to an attack upon the "Anglo-American imperialists." In second- and third-grade schools the Czech or Slovak languages are learned together with one foreign language. Before the war German or French was the usual foreign language selected; these have now been replaced by Russian.

The Student Congress

The Congress was the largest student gathering ever to be held, and it is perhaps not surprising that with over 1,500 students assembled in one hall informal debate was impracticable. In point of fact, most speakers used the rostrum to deliver a political diatribe rather than to address the assembled students.

Once again the amenities afforded were beyond reproach, and the simultaneous translation of all speeches into five languages and their transmission through a headphone system equalled the facilities at Lake Success.

The first indication of the trend which was to be followed in later speeches was given in the address of welcome by the Deputy Prime Minister, who bitterly attacked the Western Powers, with particular reference to American "aggression" in Korea, and who ended with a eulogy of the U.S.S.R. and of Stalin. This line was followed not only by the students themselves but also by a succession of guest speakers, including the Czech Prime Minister, several Ministers of Cabinet rank, the heads of the Churches, delegates of shopworkers and peasants, visiting scientists, and various other well-known personalities.

Many of us received our worst emotional shock when three bishops, heads of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Czech national churches, made political speeches in support of the Stockholm appeal in addressing the Congress. The Orthodox bishop ended his address: "The blessing of the Almighty Lord on our great goal; long live unafraid the true fighters for peace, at the head of whom is our great Stalin."

The Congress sessions were conducted under a façade of democratic procedure, but actually the major decisions, and the very atmosphere and demonstrations, were clearly controlled by the leaders, and in particular by the Russian delegation. There were many instances of undemocratic behaviour of the Congress Praesidium, perhaps best exemplified by the fact that formal speeches had to be handed in 24 hours in advance, ostensibly to allow time for preparation of translations. Actually by this procedure not only was the secretariat able to call upon speakers in a pre-selected and carefully calculated order, but there is strong evidence that the draft speeches of certain Western delegates were made available in advance to the Communist speakers who had been chosen to reply. Occasionally even the façade of democracy broke down and the chair became openly partisan.

A significant feature of the Congress was the number of demonstrations which were directed against the Western students. Most of the demonstrations followed the same general pattern, and to understand them it must be appreciated that for the Communist students the atmosphere was one of almost religious fervour. The speaker would launch

an attack on the "Anglo-American imperialists," usually followed by personal abuse of Mr. Jenkins, leader of the British delegation, and ending with either "Long Live Peace!", "Down with Imperialism!", or "Hands off Korea!" These exhortations were invariably followed by hysterical cheering and clapping, generally leading on to the newly developed technique of "rhythm-clapping," where words or syllables are accentuated by rhythmic hand-clapping. At this stage the cheering students would surge forward to the rostrum to embrace and to shower flowers upon the speaker, who would then be carried shoulder-high down the hall, usually together with the remainder of his delegation, and almost invariably paraded round and round the tables of the British delegation. It is mortifying to have to report that the British Communist students present—about 70 in all—played a leading part in these demonstrations. They presented the Korean delegation with a gift of penicillin, and delighted to carry these Korean students and their army leader round their British colleagues to the chant of "Hands off Korea!"

The demonstrations, which were to some extent symbolic, with the triumphant marching of the Eastern students around and between the tables of the isolated Western delegations, were undoubtedly a strong propaganda point, demonstrating the unity of "the students of the world" against the "imperialists." Unfortunately such demonstrations also broadened and perhaps biased the attitudes and opinions of the Western students, and hastened the splitting of the students present into two ideological groups. The Congress may not have actually increased the difficulties in the way of co-operation between students of the East and West, but it certainly made these difficulties more obvious.

Since Eastern students are prevented from travelling freely abroad it has been argued that the presence of students holding different views must have been an influence for good. Unfortunately the majority of students attending the Congress were drawn from the *élite* of Communism and were beyond the reach of argument; while the highly biased reporting in Eastern European newspapers made it impossible for the Western arguments to be heard beyond the Congress hall.

Colonial students were well represented, and, although the majority of their leaders were militant and aggressive Communists who mouthed slogans and expounded the universal panacea of Marxism, there were a number of colonial speakers whose reasoned arguments and obvious sincerity commanded respect. Delegates from Imperial countries came to realize how urgent it is that our system shall offer to colonial dependants the opportunity for a speedy rise in their living conditions and, in general, a fuller life under free democratic conditions. If we do not act quickly then these peoples will seek such benefits elsewhere. It is foolish to imagine that Russia can expand her colonial empire only by war: inactivity and neglect by colonial powers will effect the conquest far more certainly than military means.

Medicine

Any British medical student abroad is certain to be interested in the health services, and it is surprising to find that in a Communist State the national health service is as yet available only to approximately two-thirds of the population. There is no separate health tax comparable with the contributions to the National Health Insurance scheme in this country, but both the cost of health services and that of the national insurance scheme are borne by the State from funds raised by direct and indirect taxation. The organization of the service seems to be developing on

parallel lines with changes in most European countries; the importance of the general practitioner is rapidly decreasing and emphasis is being laid on the hospital and specialist services. We were told that a large number of new hospitals have been and are being built under the recent five-year plan, and in some districts experimental "health centres" have already been set up.

During our stay we were taken over two of the largest hospitals in Prague and some of us were also able to visit the International Student Sanatorium at Trebotov. In addition, it was possible to establish a more informal contact with some Czech doctors. We concluded that the hospital buildings were excellent, the main equipment—still largely German or American—very good, but that the minor equipment, such as hypodermic syringes, small surgical instruments, stethoscopes, needles, etc., was of an incredibly poor quality, probably because of the difficulty in obtaining stainless steel in Czechoslovakia. At a time when students in Britain are planning to establish special facilities for their tuberculous colleagues so that something of the university atmosphere and teaching may be available to them even while ill, it was particularly interesting to visit the International Student Sanatorium at Trebotov, where some of these aims have already been achieved. It is difficult to believe that the sanatorium is only 20 kilometres from Prague; it is surrounded by a pine and birch forest, and the atmosphere of peace and beauty suggests the very depths of the country.

The Bulovka Hospital, the largest in Prague, is situated on the outskirts of the city on a pleasant hill overlooking the River Vltava. The grounds of the hospital must be several acres in extent, as each department is housed in a separate pavilion—a scheme which adds greatly to the aesthetic value and is appreciated by convalescent patients but which introduces many problems of administration. We found, however, that the hospital was over-centralized, each department or specialty to a large measure being autonomous, with all the perils that this implies.

Both at the Bulovka Hospital and at the other large Prague hospital visited student delegates were formally welcomed by the directors, who made very many political points in their addresses of welcome. We were told that because of the happiness and security under the new regime chronic alcoholism was declining, psychiatric disorders decreasing, V.D. almost a rarity, and prostitution wiped out. We found that this political atmosphere prevailed throughout the medical profession, and after a tour of the hospitals we took part in a medical discussion, which unfortunately confirmed our fears. During discussion a French Communist student asked for an explanation of how dialectical materialism had affected Czech medicine, and it was apparent in the discussion that every single doctor of the Czech hospital staff present felt compelled to take part. In fact discussion on this point could be ended only by the intervention of the director himself.

In Czechoslovakia a doctor theoretically works only seven to eight hours a day, and when newly qualified commences with a salary of 7,000 crowns a month. In practice, because of the shortage of doctors, he works longer and is paid more. The system of promotion is peculiar, and there is "a special remuneration for industrious workers" which allows the young doctor to reach the highest salary ranges of his profession—that is, in the order of 25,000 crowns a month. To give these figures some meaning it should be mentioned that the minimum legal wage is 1,800 crowns a month, and that the average wage of a skilled worker is around 5,000 crowns a month, while a shock-worker may earn three times as much.

It was impossible in such a short visit to obtain any but the most general and personal of impressions, but we admired the close and cordial relations existing between the medical and non-medical staffs of Czech hospitals. Even the humblest laundry maid was regarded, and regarded herself, as an integral member of the hospital team and was assured that her opinions and suggestions would be welcomed at regular meetings where all the staff were represented.

General Impressions

The newspapers in Czechoslovakia are completely censored and present only one point of view, a fact which is accepted by many Czech intellectuals as an essential temporary expedient. Foreign newspapers can be imported into Czechoslovakia only under licence. These licences are very hard to obtain, and though the British delegates made application at the beginning of the Congress the *Daily Worker* was always the only paper on sale. Similarly airmail copies of other English newspapers dispatched direct to the students in Prague failed to reach them. The bookshops stock little but the works of Marx, Lenin, and Engels, and the only English books we saw translated were certain of the works of Dickens—for example, *Oliver Twist*, *Bleak House*.

Apart from the censorship of the Press there are many other inroads into the liberty of the individual. Open opposition to the Government is a crime against the State, and, though three political parties are said to exist, all three are Communist and their programmes differ solely in the way in which they would achieve a fully Communist regime. If we accept that Czechoslovakia is a police State the reports of students being followed are not surprising. This was certainly true in the cases of the leaders of the British delegation. Towards the end of our visit the B.M.S.A. representative found himself being followed in the most obvious manner. This experience, though at first unpleasant, in no way interfered with one's freedom of movement and could at times be quite amusing. The worship of the U.S.S.R. and "the great father, leader, and teacher—J. V. Stalin"—is a feature of everyday life in Prague. It was strange to find that portraits of Stalin took precedence over the Czech President; the red flag over the Czech national flag. Most of the rooms in the student hostels were decorated with portraits of Stalin, similar to those invariably displayed in hospital dining-rooms and clinics. The fact that two odes were sung to Stalin at a concert given by the Russian students surprised no one but the naive British.

Among the people there is a genuine and deep desire for peace, but they are being educated to "fight for peace," and they already fear "imperialist aggression." In the event of war the ordinary citizen of Prague has been so prepared that he will certainly believe aggression to originate in the West. The fear of Fascism remains very real after the Nazi occupation. We visited Lidice, where we saw harrowing relics which keep alive the hatred of Fascism. There is no doubt that the Communist argument runs: "This is what Fascism did to us—we are the enemies of Fascism—our enemies are Fascists and will do deeds like this."

The Ministry of Health has announced revised rates of payment for health visitors, district nurses and midwives, and other nurses employed in the public health service, and also for senior nursing staff in mental hospitals. These new rates have been agreed by the Nurses and Midwives' Whitley Council, following an award made by the Industrial Court, and they are retrospective to February 1, 1949.