

Time for an Emancipation Proclamation

By JOHN C. WEAVER

Just what can be freely discussed in war time is always a puzzle. Perhaps it is determined by the Government; more likely Chesterton's formula gives the answer: "When modern sociologists talk of the necessity of accommodating one's self to the trend of the time, they forget that the trend of the time at its best consists entirely of people who will not accommodate themselves to anything. At its worst it consists of many millions of frightened creatures all accommodating themselves to a trend that is not there."

By some mystery, "the trend" is again permitting discussion of food for our starving allies in occupied countries. When so great a figure as Herbert Hoover was bitterly denounced and swept aside as he advocated food relief, in the period before Pearl Harbor, it seemed unlikely that the subject could again be mentioned until after the war. But the American Forum of the Air, on the evening of August 16, invited Norman Thomas and Mary Hillyer (long-time Socialist comrades) to speak on behalf of immediate feeding, while Dr. Frank Kingdon and Mrs. Benjamin Watson were constrained to reply to them—with righteous heat. Newspaper radio columns announced the program in strong language: "Europe is starving. Untold thousands in occupied countries friendly to the United States are dropping in the streets for want of food and medical supplies, while we are wondering just how much help to give them without aiding Hitler and his gang."

It is regrettable, to many Georgists, that no great leader has appeared, from their own or other moderate groups, to replace Norman Thomas as a vanguard spokesman for free speech and common humanity at times when other spokesmen are wanting. That is our fault, not his: give him honor for fighting our battle. We might fight it better—but we don't.

He emphasized the appalling undernourishment in many countries, but especially the desperate situation in Greece.

Greece offers the most striking among the tragic mysteries of the day. A few months after the United States entered the war, a neutral food ship sailed to Greece from America, with assurance of safe passage from both German and Allied authorities. No official explanation of this divergence from previous policy seems to have been given, nor yet for the news in August that three Swedish steamers, with grain, were sailing from Montreal for Greece, "under safe conduct guarantees granted by all the belligerent governments." But in May a clue had appeared.

Ten thousand of the starving dwellers on Greek islands of the Aegean Sea, "including many refugees from Athens and other cities on the Greek mainland," were reported to have crossed into Turkey, "in frail small boats," and "by devious means, eluding Turkish patrols. Half of them are in the Smyrna area, emaciated and yellow-skinned from malnutrition.

... Unless food is sent to the islands soon, a tidal wave of Greeks may break upon the Turkish shores with the probability that the situation will be getting out of hand. . . . Panic is spreading among the islanders as they see only death from starvation before them, and they will get across somehow. . . . Hundreds of persons have been lost at sea, and others have been fired on by the Turkish patrols." "Turkey, though short of food itself, has decided to send . . . raisins, dried figs and fish to the islands."

Nothing was reported concerning any interference with this migration by the Nazis, though other accounts tell of their using forced Greek labor. It is the neutral neighbor country which has been stopping the ref-

ugees, while "to encourage them to remain on the islands, Britain has sent Canadian flour."

This helps to clear up the mystery of the food ships crossing the blockade, despite all declarations that feeding is an aid to Hitler. What lash or weapon in the hands of a Nazi taskmaster is so effective, in extracting labor from conquered manpower, as the ultimatum: "Work for us or we will withhold food from your children?" Even at the expense of extra food to the Nazis, one would suppose that Allied strategists might prefer to feed the children and give their fathers courage to refuse labor, or better yet, get this manpower out from under Hitler's control. But at the first proven example of accomplishing such a feat on a large scale, what happens? Refugees are driven back into Nazi territory, and food is at long last sent to them, lest they cross the line. Billions of dollars and millions of lives to keep the people of Europe and Asia exactly where they are—but not one cent to help them escape from tyranny to any of the lands of the free.

Or are there such lands? Here in the story of the Aegean islanders, as told by the Associated Press, is an item of universal familiarity: "A few unscrupulous Greeks were cooperating with the Germans in making money in the black market, buying up at small prices the property which the departing islanders must sell to get passage money." Black markets know no lines of blood or nationality. Wherever refugees go—in Naziland or Democracy, now or next century—will they find the same black traffic in the right to set foot on earth?

A Freeman editorial of October, 1941, told us "How to Smash Hitler," by offering to every one of his unwilling subjects "about five acres of our millions and millions of unused acres." There was nothing im-

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practical about an exactly similar "war measure" in 1863, when Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, and encouraged slaves to desert from the labor force of the enemy. The time is ripe for a leader of equal vision to emancipate the slaves of Hitler. The story of the Aegean proves once more an ancient fact: No barriers, obstacles, or battle lines; no frontiers guarded only on one side by the jailers of an oppressed people, will stop the oppressed from breaking away, if there is any place on God's earth where men will permit them to go. Is this a war for freedom, or is it a war to prevent free migration? Is it a war to "protect the innocent?" If so, and if Ranger commandos can raid the continent for purposes of destruction, why not to rescue the innocent?

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