

1956 Spain

# CURT- (H) ETC. INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS

Munich, April 16, Monit/Leason... The Hungarian communist paper ~~the~~ Szabad Nep this morning blamed both the National Trade Unions Council and the Ministry of Health for failure to cooperate in reducing industrial accidents.

The paper~~s~~ said that although 800 million forints were allotted to industry and agriculture during the last Five-Year Plan for protecting the workers' health, work conditions "in many places" were unsatisfactory and many safety devices have turned out in practice to be "useless".

~~BOTH~~ The paper said that the Trade Unions Council and the Health Ministry have a scientific institute for work safety, but cooperation between the two is "very lax".

The paper said that safety is dealt with as if it were merely a technical matter. Training workers in safety is compulsory but "in most cases" this training either never takes place at all or only as a formality. Safety lectures are on a low level and the factories themselves take little interest in developing new safety devices.

The paper said factory managers would be "very correct" to "revive" safety brigades.

Western observers said today that an increase in industrial accidents, particularly in the coal mines, is due to the speed-up and overtime work found necessary to fulfill already drastically exaggerated industrial plans. There have been reports of regular Sunday\*shifts in the coal mines of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland to make up lagging plans.

The observers said, however, that the real reason for concern with safety can probably be found in the April 6th speech by the new First Secretary of the Polish Communist Party, Edward Ochab.

Ochab explained to an audience of party activists in Warsaw that when attempts ~~he~~ were made to save money in various ministries "it often happened that they were made precisely in expenditure on industrial safety and hygiene or that the planned expenditure for this purpose was not put into effect." He said he brought the matter up "because of the fact that it concerns the health of the working people."

But, he said, "We must also bear in mind that ~~in~~ in the final instance these neglects cost many millions through losses in production caused by accidents, because of the need to pay pensions and sickness benefits."

Another Szabad Nep editorial, of April 13th, discussed specifically coal-mine safety. The editorial accused mine managers of reducing production costs by decreasing the amount spent on safety measures, especially on good pit props. The paper said that it has lately appeared that the use of modern and safe mine transportation has been completely "abandoned", even though 50 per cent of the accidents are ~~caused~~ during transportation. The editorial also charged that mine managers and the

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trade unions are responsible for the accidents even though official inquiries on mine disasters usually blame them on the workers' "inattention".

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The Hungarian trade union paper, Hepszava, criticizing overtime work in the mines, said last month that ~~the~~ "rushwork" to fulfill the last half of the 1955 production plan had resulted in a six per cent increase in mine accidents. C153

The paper quoted one miner as saying: "We all almost lose our senses in an effort to earn more." Another, an injured miner, said: "Believe me, after twelve or sixteen hours work here in the dust, one neither hears nor sees anything."

The paper added that it often takes sixteen hours to fulfill an eight-hour norm because of the scarcity of transportation and pit props.

The western observers noted that many of the accidents are caused by failure to observe the proper time limit before returning to the mine-faces after the minor blasts set off to loosen the coal. They said the non-observance of this most elemental precaution results from the need, whatever the risks, to employ every minute to keep up with the exorbitant plan demands.

A report from Poland on a Feb. 18th mine disaster in Silesia in which at least 15 miners lost their lives said that mine employees blamed the disaster on instructions from the mine management to speed up extraction under the pretext that the miners were behind on their prescribed norms.

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