

A PAVLOV ANNIVERSARY

A MEETING of scientific societies was held recently in Moscow to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the death of Ivan Petrovitch Pavlov, the great physiologist of the U.S.S.R. Many papers* were read describing fresh work on conditioned reflexes and on various phases of nervous activity: the short abstracts alone are an impressive tribute to Pavlov's memory, as well as a renewed proof of the vigour of Soviet science.

The scientific workers of the U.S.S.R. may well be proud of such a leader. Pavlov combined great originality and driving power with experimental skill of a high order, and he had also the force of character which made him stand as a symbol of scientific integrity in a world divided by political theories. Few who were there will forget his appearance at the International Congress of Physiologists in Edinburgh in 1923. He made it difficult to believe, as many did in those days, that his country had become either a new hell or a new heaven, but it was quite clear that he preferred it to other countries.

The vigour and directness of Pavlov's approach to a problem is shown in all his work on digestion and still more in that on the conditioned reflexes. Since his interests had been concentrated on this field for many years before his death, it is no wonder that the papers read recently at Moscow dealt mainly with neurological topics. Indeed, to the man in the street Pavlov's name recalls the conditioned reflex and nothing else; few but physiologists will remember that he won the Nobel Prize for Medicine in 1904 for his work on digestion before he turned to the study of salivary secretion as a quantitative measure of acquired habits. In this study, which forms the basis of the conditioned reflex theory, Pavlov used only the simplest conceptions and deliberately confined himself to physiological terms. It is easy to point out that there are other ways of looking at the phenomena of learning, that the psychologist is entitled to his say and that the conditioned reflex scheme may not even cover all that the brain can do. Many critics have made these obvious points and have regarded them as raising fatal objections to Pavlov's scheme. They are, no doubt, objections which must be answered by those who regard the conditioned reflex as the clue to all human knowledge and activity, but they have very little to do with its merits as a method of finding out more about the working of the nervous system.

As often happens, so much has been claimed that the solid achievement is in danger of being forgotten. The achievement is recalled by Podkopaiev in his paper at the recent anniversary meeting, when he says that "The method of conditioned reflexes has become a powerful instrument in the study of the behaviour of animals and man". It has been an instrument in constant use to investigate the range of action of the sense organs, the effects of injury of the central nervous system, the action of drugs and

of internal secretions, in fact in all problems which demand some means of assessing the effectiveness of cerebral activity. It is a method of the greatest value in the study of the learning process; its value as a means of research in new fields was shown by Pavlov's latest studies of neurosis formation in animals, and by the many researches carried out since his death by his pupils in the U.S.S.R. Loyalty to the theories of such an inspiring leader might have its dangers when the leader was one to whom theories ranked chiefly as a prelude to experiment. But the Pavlov tradition cannot lead to stagnation so long as there are men who remember Pavlov himself with his intense vitality and his eagerness for new discovery.

E. D. ADRIAN

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND ETHNOLOGICAL SCIENCES

THE Permanent Council of the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences met at Oxford during April 12-15. At the Second Session of this Congress, held at Copenhagen in 1938, no place was chosen for the third in 1942. The War intervened, and has postponed a full session until 1947. But it has been found practicable to convene the Permanent Council and to resume some of the normal activities of the Congress, through its research committees.

The Royal Anthropological Institute accordingly invited the Council to meet in Britain, and the University of Oxford, through its Sub-Faculty of Anthropology, provided a place of assembly, the delegates being accommodated in New College. Germany and Austria were still inaccessible, but invitations were accepted, and delegates nominated, by every other European country (except Bulgaria, Rumania, and the U.S.S.R.); also by the United States, Mexico, Canada, South Africa, and British India; and Lord Hailey represented the Colonial Office. Delegates from Yugoslavia found the journey too difficult, but Hungary was represented.

The Council was formally welcomed by the Vice-Chancellor, and received in the hall of Corpus Christi College. The death of the president at the Copenhagen meeting, Dr. Thomas Thomsen, had made a vacancy which was filled by Prof. H. J. Fleure, president of the Royal Anthropological Institute. Most of the sessions were devoted to reports and discussions, which will be fully reported in the Royal Anthropological Institute's publication *Man*; but public lectures were given by the Abbé Breuil on "The Bushman Art of South Africa, and its Problems", by Prof. W. E. Le Gros Clark on the "Immediate Problems of Human Palæontology", by Dr. J. S. Weiner on "Physiological Anthropology", and by Miss Amice Calverley on her film-records of Rumanian folk dances. Visits were paid to the Pitt Rivers Museum, the Ashmolean Museum, and the Department of Human Anatomy, where the Sub-Faculty of Anthropology entertained the delegates at tea.

Among the subjects of discussion were the standardization of anthropometric technique, the definition of anthropological terms, the place of anthropology in education, the conservation of aboriginal peoples, and the influence of megalithic culture on other cultures. The scope and relations of the United Nations

*The papers were in five groups: (1) Higher Nervous Activity: P. S. Kupalov, V. K. Fedorov, N. A. Podkopaiev, L. G. Voronin, E. E. Sheivekhtman; (2) Evolution of Higher Nervous Activity: A. N. Promptov, G. I. Zobkalo; (3) Biochemical and Electrophysiological Aspects of the Functions of the Nervous System: E. M. Kreps, N. N. Livshitz, V. A. Shidlovsky; (4) Connexions of the Cerebral Cortex with other Parts of the Central Nervous System and with Sense Organs: A. J. Bronstein, A. D. Slonim, M. F. Vassiliev; (5) Adaptive-Trophic Function of the Nervous System: A. G. Ginezinsky, A. D. Ado and N. M. Shamarina, A. D. Ado, M. E. Ersin, L. M. Tshimova and V. N. Smirnov, L. J. Pines and J. U. Zelikin, L. A. Orbeli, N. I. Michelson, E. A. Moisseev and I. N. Zotikova, A. A. Fadeeva, V. N. Chernigovsky, N. V. Zimkin and V. I. Medvedev, M. I. Saprokhin.