So far only isolated specimens from the Red Sea volcanic islands have received preliminary examination under the microscope. All the specimens examined were olivine basalts, but there is considerable textural variation from strongly porphyritic to aphyric types but with a relatively uniform mineral content. The main rock-forming minerals are olivine (c. Fa_{12-20}), clinopyroxene and plagioclase (c. An_{50-65}). When present as phenocrysts, the olivine is euhedral and commonly zoned from a forsteritic core to a more fayalitic margin, while plagioclase phenocrysts, although within the labradorite range, are often progressively zoned from a calcic core to a more sodic rim. The ground mass is intergranular with minute, sub-hedral crystals of olivine and clinopyroxene occurring between laths of plagioclase. Volcanic glass, or its alteration products, is rare. Sufficient work has not been undertaken to establish whether there is any significant petrological variation between the rocks of the three island groups, but specimens examined indicate affinities with the alkaline rather than the tholeiitic association.

Petrographic investigation of the specimens collected in all areas is in progress at present.

We thank the chairman and members of the Volcanological Expeditions Committee of the Royal Society for their support and encouragement and the Royal Society and the Universities of Leeds and Edinburgh for financial assistance. We also thank the various branches of H.M. Forces for their assistance and hospitality during our stay in South Arabia, and members of the British Petroleum Company, Aden and Little Aden, and the South Arabian Federal Government for their generous assistance.

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OBITUARIES

Prof. Hans Halban

PROF. HANS HALBAN, who died on November 28, 1964, at the age of fifty-six, will be widely remembered among scientists for his major contributions in slow neutron physics before the Second World War which led up to the successful realization of the nuclear reactor.

Halban was born in Leipzig on January 26, 1908, and after education in Austria he went to the University of Zurich, where he gained his Ph.D. in 1935, working in the laboratory where his father was professor of physical chemistry. He then moved to Mme Curie's Institut de Radium in Paris, and it was at this time that he started his research on slow neutron physics. In 1937 he went with a special scholarship to Niels Bohr's laboratory in Copenhagen and carried out neutron experiments with Frisch and Koch, which included a measurement of the neutron magnetic moment and a study of the internal field in a ferromagnetic substance using neutrons. He returned to Paris in 1938 to become Chargé de Recherches in the Laboratoire de Chimie Nucleaire in the Collège de France of which F. Joliot-Curie was director and where he continued his neutron studies. This culminated in his great work in 1939 along with Kowarski and Joliot-Curie on the neutrons from the fission of uranium. It was these experiments involving the moderation of neutrons in uranium solutions that first demonstrated the possibility of a chain reaction and, in a classic sequence of papers in that year, Halban, Kowarski and Joliot-Curie discussed the process together with methods for its control. This work was interrupted by the War and the fall of France in 1940, but Halban succeeded in escaping to England, bringing with him under dramatic circumstances the precious churns of heavy water. These 180 litres formed the greater part of the world's stock and had been purchased to extend the moderation studies in Paris. Under the auspices of the MAUD Committee this research was continued in the Cavendish Laboratory where Halban was in charge of the slow neutron team. As the effort on the project developed, so the active centre of research moved to Montreal and in 1942 he took charge of the joint British-Canadian team which included several distinguished French scientists and was concerned, among other matters, with the development of reactors. It was this work which finally led to the construction of the heavy-water reactor at the Chalk River Laboratories.

He resigned this appointment in 1945 and a year later went to Oxford at the invitation of Lord Cherwell, who

was then head of the Clarendon Laboratory. He quickly built up a team of research students which was set to work on problems both in neutron and nuclear structure physics. Many of these research students came from overseas and had been drawn to him through his wide contacts abroad and his international reputation as a physicist. Under his lively and imaginative influence the group flourished and produced many original papers on a wide range of subjects. The research was often hampered by shortage of funds and equipment, and with characteristic generosity he would contribute from his own resources to enable the work to continue. It was in 1951 that a co-operative effort between some of his nuclear physics group and a number of low-temperature physicists under the general direction of the late Sir Francis Simon showed that it was possible to attain a substantial degree of alignment of the nuclei of radioactive cobalt-60. This field of research, in which he had first become interested in 1937, soon developed into a powerful tool for studying problems in both nuclear and solid-state physics and is being actively pursued to this day in many laboratories. In 1950 he was made a fellow of St. Antony's College in whose foundation he was deeply interested, and in 1954 the University of Oxford conferred the title of professor on him. He returned to Paris in 1956 to become professeur associé at the Ecole Normale Supérieure and a director of the Orsay laboratory, where a high-energy electron accelerator was to be installed. He retired from active nuclear physics in 1963.

Halban will be remembered by his friends and colleagues, and not least by his research students, for his boundless enthusiasm, his originality and his continuous stream of ideas. He was critical of his own work and he demanded a high standard from others, but he tempered this with great understanding, generosity, warmth and loyalty. He was a dynamic character and a great physicist.

M. A. GRACE

Prof. A. Voisin

AN internationally recognized figure, Prof. André Voisin died in Cuba on December 22, 1964, at the age of sixty-one, while engaged on a lecturing programme connected with the reorganization of the agriculture of that country.

The study of grassland and the grazing animal, by virtue of its complexity, has given rise over the years to many prophets: men of zeal, evangelistic by nature, and

all in some degree dogmatic. Undoubtedly one of these was Voisin. He came of Norman farming stock and trained as a biochemist in Paris and at Heidelberg. It was as a practical dairy farmer in his native Normandy, however, producing milk from grass, that he gained the experience synthesized in his philosophy of 'rational' or 'timed' grazing.

Voisin burst upon the British farming scene in 1957 with the publication of possibly his best book, *Grass Productivity*. Its translation into English was followed by translation into Russian, German, Japanese and Hungarian. Here he propounded his philosophy of grassland management, the 'rational' system, basically a rotational grazing system strictly governed by defoliation frequency in relation to rate of herbage growth. The success of this work stimulated further publications—*Better Grassland Sward*, and *Soil, Grass and Cancer*, and finally, *Grass Tetany*.

Throughout his writings Voisin stressed that the grass crop must not be considered in isolation. The sward, which in turn depends on the soil, should always be related to the needs of the grazing animal, its health, well-being and production. Sward management can favour the grazing animal or the sward at any point in the grazing season without much difficulty. The results, however, may not be ultimately satisfactory. Voisin's great contribution was the evolution of a simple grazing system, soundly based, which sought and obtained the best, at one and the same time, from both sward and animal within the limits of the potential available. His reasoning quickly found favour with progressive dairy farmers, who applied his ideas with advantage. Present-day research work in plant breeding and herbage variety testing, through the use of new techniques, particularly *in vitro* studies of digestibility, is directed at taking into account the elusive 'quality' factor in fodder: in other words, the ultimate value of the feed to the animal in terms of net output. Voisin realized at an early stage that production of dry matter *per se* was not the whole answer. All his writing emphasized consideration of the needs of the animal in order to obtain optimum results.

It was unfortunate that most of his thinking centred on the permanent pasture as the most suitable medium for the dairy cow. His philosophy, moreover, hinged on only moderate use of fertilizers. Under conditions in

Britain, however, the permanent sward, because of its normally small legume contribution, is dependent on heavy fertilizer input for high herbage production, and for this reason Voisin, perhaps unknowingly, never quite completely reconciled his approach from his continental background with the fundamental economic needs of the dairy farm in Britain. These have been clear-cut over the years and have given rise to marked intensification of production determined largely by high fertilizer nitrogen application and a growing dependence on the short-term ley as a means of lengthening the growing season. In this context, Voisin's views on the 'sacrifice' of animal and plant in the cause of blind intensification of production were timely.

His brisk, forceful style and completely convincing manner, both as writer and lecturer, gained him wide popularity while provoking much controversy, to the benefit of farmer and scientific worker alike, for he gave even the most experienced grassland and animal workers cause to stop and think. From his wide knowledge of the literature, Voisin made more than a reasoned case for most of his conclusions, including those on human health arrived at in his highly controversial work, *Soil, Grass and Cancer*. His omnibus approach obviously caused him to conflict with many specialized views, but one of his great attributes was that, although acutely aware of the trees, his great concern was with the wood: the conclusions he reached were most difficult to dismiss lightly.

Above all, Voisin was a master in public relations. He aimed directly for his audience, the farming community, and being a farmer himself, he knew exactly how to orientate his arguments to gain the most telling effect. His boundless energy and enthusiasm, not forgetting his humanity, are reflected throughout his work. Voisin's contribution to grassland farming practice was very large: Normandy may well be proud of her son, who found world favour in his chosen field.

Among the many honours he received abroad was an honorary degree from the University of Bonn. He was a member of the Académie d'Agriculture of his own country and also held the Croix de Guerre gained during the Second World War.

J. B. D. HERRIOTT
CATHERINE HERRIOTT

NEWS and VIEWS

Chemical Crystallography in the Imperial College of Science and Technology : Prof. D. Rogers

DR. D. ROGERS, reader in chemical crystallography in the Imperial College of Science and Technology, has been appointed to the newly established chair of chemical crystallography in the Department of Chemistry of Imperial College. Although 'born and bred' a physicist, he enjoys a national and international reputation as an X-ray crystallographer, combined with a lively interest in computers and programming. Dr. Rogers was educated at Wallington (Surrey) Grammar School and graduated in 1941 at King's College, London. After securing a Ph.D. in physics at King's College in 1944, he became assistant lecturer in the College of Technology, Manchester, where his early work on X-ray crystallography was carried out. In 1948 he moved to University College, Cardiff, where he remained as a close collaborator of Prof. A. J. C. Wilson until he joined Imperial College in 1961: he held an Imperial Chemical Industries fellowship for part of this period. Since his appointment as reader at Imperial College, he has established a thriving school of chemical crystallography. Dr. Rogers's prolific studies of crystal structures have been mainly among complex organic compounds, and substances of special biological significance have provided the main field for his recent work. Nevertheless, he maintains a keen interest in other struc-

tures, and has contributed much to the work of colleagues in inorganic chemistry, particularly in the study of metal complexes. He and his research school are substantial users of the *Atlas* computer in the University of London.

Analytical Chemistry in the Imperial College of Science and Technology: Prof. T. S. West

DR. T. S. WEST, reader in analytical chemistry at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, has been appointed as from October 1 to the newly established chair of analytical chemistry, the first in this discipline in the University of London. Dr. West was born in Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, in 1927, and after education at Tarbat Old Public School and Tain Royal Academy, winning first place in the Scottish Education Department's 'Highlands and Islands' Bursary Competition, proceeded to the University of Aberdeen, where he graduated with first-class honours in 1949. He then gained his doctorate, under Prof. Belcher, at the University of Birmingham, obtaining also his D.Sc. there in 1962. He was lecturer in the University of Birmingham until his transfer to the Imperial College of Science and Technology in 1963. Dr. West was awarded the Meldola Medal of the Royal Institute of Chemistry in 1956, the first analytical chemist to have won this distinction. In addition to his productive research activities which have