

NEWS AND VIEWS

Science and Censorship

THE so-called magnetic mine and the device recently used by Germany for laying mines at sea by means of aircraft are reminders—if such reminders are necessary—of the increasing use which is being made in warfare of recent research and invention. This must not be placed either to the credit or debit side of the balance sheet of science. Very few indeed of the scientific developments now being widely used in the present war are the outcome of research directed towards their present purposes; rather they are adaptations of results obtained by men of science in their inquiries into natural phenomena, and many of them have a history of much useful service to mankind before their powers for destruction were utilized. Scientific curiosity, the urge to know how and why things work, must never be stifled; and in time of war, this is especially true. It is all the more regrettable, therefore, that the powers that be neglect to release information which would satisfy the curiosity of scientific workers. Speculative articles in the lay press carry little conviction; it should not be unduly difficult to keep men of science informed of the general principles of so-called new weapons without giving information to the enemy; this would do much towards allaying the doubts aroused by official silence. As was pointed out in the leading article in *NATURE* of October 14: "In the fighting services themselves the methods of defence and offence are largely scientific. Some of these methods are highly secret; others are well known to the enemy. There could be no conceivable harm, and there might be great good, in informing the public freely of the latter. . . . The present danger is that everything scientific may be censored, even laws of Nature." Publication of scientific facts already well known to the enemy—for example, the structure of various of his own instruments captured in action or otherwise recovered—would prove not merely of interest to men of science but also probably of the utmost value in forming the topic of scientific discussion.

Invasion of Finland

EARLY this year, Czechoslovakia was lost to democracy by the action of Germany; last September, Poland was invaded and very shortly afterwards divided between Germany and the U.S.S.R. Now Finland has been attacked by the U.S.S.R. The methods adopted by the aggressors, German and Russian, have been similar in each case. These two dictatorships are making a determined onslaught on smaller and independent States, and all who value freedom of thought and other democratic institutions will regard their actions with abhorrence. Finland, as a separate State, is young in years, but her people have already established for themselves a reputation for enterprise and industry. A considerable export trade in timber, wood-pulp and butter has been

built up, and the country also possesses valuable nickel deposits which were being developed. Helsinki, the capital, has an ancient university and a technical institution. Readers of *NATURE* will recall several communications in these columns from Prof. A. I. Virtanen and colleagues, of the Biochemical Institute, Helsinki, describing work on chemical aspects of the biological fixation of nitrogen, while Dr. P. Suomalainen has recorded work on changes in the blood which occur in hibernating animals. It is also of interest to note that M. Pekkala, finance minister in the new Government formed immediately after the invasion of Finland, is director of the State Forest Institute.

Science and Political Theory under the Soviets

A LITTLE while ago archæologists and students of the prehistory of the Eurasian continental tract received with profound regret and no little dismay the news that no further numbers of *Eurasia Septentrionalis Antiqua* would be published. This much-valued archæological periodical has been issued under the auspices of the Finnish Archæological Society and edited by A. M. Tallgren, professor of archæology in the University of Helsinki. Founded by Prof. Tallgren himself, it has contained in the twelve volumes of its issue many notable contributions to archæological science in its special field, the prehistory of European and Asiatic Russia and adjacent regions, by archæologists of world-wide reputation; but its mainstay has been the work of its editor, Prof. Tallgren himself, who has devoted more than thirty years to this subject. It was his constant aim, however, to advance knowledge in this field by synthetic study of the broader problems, rather than by specialized research; and for this purpose it has been necessary for him to seek international co-operation both by way of comparative study and for constant reference to, and verification from, original material in museums and collections. This assistance has been given freely. Prof. Tallgren modestly attributes the success of *Eurasia* to the collaboration of more than a hundred archæologists in Europe and the United States. He personally, for his own special studies, has relied to no little degree upon the help of his Russian colleagues; but for some time past he has received no periodicals from Russia, and his letters and inquiries addressed to Russian archæologists have remained unanswered. The failure of this essential source of information and the absence of collaboration from this field of investigation leave so many gaps and uncertainties in Prof. Tallgren's studies that with profound reluctance he has come to the conclusion that his work, and with it the publication of *Eurasia*, must come to an end.

IN making this announcement, Prof. Tallgren does no more than glance at underlying causes when he refers to the possibility of harming an individual in