

NEWS and VIEWS

Czechoslovakia

WITHIN a few weeks of receiving the honorary doctorate of Brno University which bears his father's name, Dr. Jan Masaryk passed away at the age of sixty-one, on March 10, in tragic circumstances. Born and educated in Prague, he would not claim to have been a man of science, though he fully appreciated the importance of science in world affairs. He had occasionally taken part in scientific and cultural discussions and conferences while in Great Britain and elsewhere. Many philosophers and men prominent in various sciences were among his numerous friends, and he was always ready to help students and others whenever an opportunity occurred, whether it was in connexion with the exchange of scholarships or of scientific literature. Like his father, the former philosopher-president of Czechoslovakia, Jan Masaryk was a great European, and his death is a loss to the whole world as well as a very serious blow to Czechoslovakia at a critical time in her tragic history.

Prague is shortly to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of its famous university, and though Masaryk had no direct connexion with that institution his death cannot fail to cast a cloud over the ceremonies planned for this historic occasion. Unfortunately, too, recent events in Czechoslovakia have given rise to anxiety in Britain and elsewhere concerning the position and fate of several colleagues well known for their researches and other contributions to the advancement of knowledge. It is understood that some, including the rector of the Charles University, Dr. Karel Engliš, have been dismissed. Science and learning suffered heavily enough during the Nazi occupation through the closure of the universities and the execution of many members of their staffs, and to-day Czechoslovakia cannot afford to lose a single talented teacher or scientific worker. Masaryk certainly realized this. His attitude towards his fellows was one of encouragement and tolerance. It found expression, for example, when he was filling up an American immigration form and came to the question, "What Race?" His answer was, "I belong to the human race".

Prof. Bohumil Němec

PROF. BOHUMIL NĚMEC, the well-known botanist, celebrated his seventy-fifth anniversary in Prague on March 12, and we are glad to report that he was then in good health. He is at present engaged upon a comprehensive text-book of general botany in Slovak for use by students at Bratislava University and for upper forms in the Slovak high schools, and a history of botany which will have a wider appeal. Němec's first researches, on diplopods, appeared in the *Transactions of the Royal Bohemian Scientific Society* in 1895, and since then he has published many researches in plant physiology in Czech, English and other journals. Only recently he exhibited to scientific audiences in England and France specimens of gold that had been extracted from ashes of plants obtained from Slovakia. He has been interested in the occurrence in plants of unusual elements for many years. Němec is not only a great experimentalist and investigator but also an able lecturer, and many of his students have contributed to the advancement of pure and applied botany. Practically all Czechoslovakia's scientific forestry and agri-

cultural experts studied under him at the Botanical Institute of the Charles University of Prague, which he directed for so many years. Since 1945 he has been occupied at the University of Bratislava in lecturing to Slovak students, and has advised on, and supervised, the establishment of botanical and physiological institutes in that University, which dates only from 1919.

Botany at Bedford College, London: Prof. L. J. Audus

DR. L. J. AUDUS, who has just been appointed to the Hildred Carlile chair of botany at Bedford College, London, is a distinguished member of the younger school of plant physiologists. He received his physiological training at Cambridge under the late Dr. F. F. Blackman, whose admirable tuition matured so many brilliant pupils. From Cambridge he went to University College, Cardiff, where he was lecturer in botany until he joined the Royal Air Force in 1941. He was stationed at Singapore, and when that city fell he escaped to Java, but was there captured by the Japanese. For three and a half years he was a prisoner in Java and Amboina, undergoing many hardships. During this period he collaborated with Dutch men of science who were fellow prisoners to organise an extremely resourceful manufacture of yeast-food, on a scale sufficient to keep vitamin starvation at bay and thus prevent what would otherwise have been a terrible mortality from beri-beri. Dr. Audus is no mean artist and the sketches he was able to bring home illustrate life in Japanese prison camps with dramatic clarity. On his return to Britain he was appointed to the Soil Metabolism Unit of the Agricultural Research Council, then situated at University College, Cardiff, under Dr. J. H. Quastel, and he was engaged in research on the action of growth-promoting substances in the soil. The Unit was closed at the end of 1947 with the departure of Dr. Quastel to Canada, and Dr. Audus had just been appointed as Monsanto lecturer in plant physiology at Cardiff when the opportunity of the appointment at Bedford College called him away. He goes accompanied by the regrets and best wishes of all his colleagues at Cardiff.

Max Planck Society for the Advancement of Scientific Research

THE Max Planck Society for the Advancement of Scientific Research was formed on February 26, with the approval of the Military Governments of the British and U.S. Zones of Germany. It will replace the Kaiser Wilhelm Society for the Advancement of Science which was dissolved in July 1946. The fact that the latter society had during the War come under the influences of the Nazi regime was one of the reasons for the order being given for its dissolution. The new Society, which will operate under the provisions of the Allied Control Council's law No. 25, relating to the control of scientific research, will have as its main object the encouragement of fundamental and independent research on peaceful lines. It will make it possible once more for the British and American Zones of Germany to be fully represented in the international field of scientific research. Otto Hahn, known for his fundamental research in nuclear fission, has been elected president, and Dr. Ernst Telschow, of Göttingen, who, since the end of the War, has played a leading part in maintaining scientific work in the U.S.-British

Zones, has been appointed general director. The following have been elected members of council: Prof. Edrich Retener, director of the Institute of Physics, Technical High School, Stuttgart; Prof. Adolf Windaus, formerly director of the Chemistry Institute, University of Göttingen; Dr. Wilhelm Boetzkef, Banking Boetzkef, banking director, of Düsseldorf; Prof. Georg Schrieber, professor of theology, University of Münster; Dr. Theo Goldschmidt, director of the chemical manufacturing firm in Essen bearing his name; Adolf Grimme, Minister for Education, Land Niedersachsen; Prof. Richard Kuhn, director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Medical Research, Heidelberg; Dr. Alfred Petersen, president of the Frankfurt Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Senator Landahl of Hamburg; and Prof. Heinrich Weiland, formerly director of the Institute of Chemistry, University of Munich. Prof. Hahn, Dr. Telschow and Prof. Max von Laue are *ex officio* members of council. In addition to the president and the general director, the following will constitute the administrative council: Prof. Retener (vice-president); Prof. von Laue (general secretary); Prof. Kuhn (deputy general secretary); Dr. Boetzkef (treasurer); and Dr. Petersen (deputy treasurer).

Serological Museum of Rutgers University

THERE has been established at Rutgers University, in New Jersey, a museum for the collection, preservation and study of the proteins of the blood and other tissues of the bodies of organisms, in the belief that such proteins are as characteristic as other constituents and are as worthy of preservation and comparison as skins and skeletons. The establishment of the Serological Museum is a logical consequence of the studies in systematic serology which have been conducted at Rutgers University since 1925, by Dr. Alan Boyden and his students and colleagues. Dr. Boyden has himself collected many representative samples of the blood sera of animals from laboratories in the United States and Great Britain, and others have been contributed by institutions and individuals; in recent years lyophilized (frozen and dried) samples of animal sera or of the purified fractions of such sera have been contributed by industrial laboratories. The principal objectives of the Serological Museum will be to preserve representative sera or other proteins of organisms and to study the means of improving methods of preservation; to build up a collection of sera and other proteins of as many kinds of organisms as possible; to share the samples collected with competent workers; and to study the methods used in systematic serology. Although the sera of hundreds of species of animals have already been collected, no group of animals is as yet adequately represented in the collection. The sera of many kinds of animals—vertebrate and invertebrate—are still needed. The growth of this Museum and its capacity for service will depend largely on co-operative efforts by many individuals and institutions. Those interested in the subject are invited to correspond with Dr. Alan Boyden, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, U.S.A.

Climatic and Ecological Changes in Northern Waters

AT the meeting of the North-Western Area Committee of the Conseil Permanent International pour l'Exploration de la Mer on October 22, 1947, the possible influence of the present climatic changes on the lives of marine animals (density, distribution,

reproduction, migration, etc.) was discussed. Having regard to the probable importance of these changes in fisheries investigations, it was decided that every opportunity should be taken, by fishery research vessels and other suitable ships, to obtain without delay all possible data bearing upon this problem, especially in waters north of the Faroes, north and east of Iceland and in the Denmark and Davis Straits. It was also decided that relevant information from sources other than those of fisheries research would be of great value and should also be obtained. The information required comprises hydrographical, meteorological, glaciological and associated changes in northern regions, and the influence of those changes on the habits and distribution of animals and plants, both terrestrial and marine. Records should include locality (latitude and longitude), depth (if marine records), date, name and profession of observer, and references to relevant publications. Especially important are new records of animals and plants from localities recently included within their range of distribution, or the absence of species from previously populated areas. All data should be given exhaustively but concisely, and arranged so far as possible under the following headings: (1) meteorology; (2) hydrography; (3) glaciology; (4) animals: (a) Mammalia, (b) Aves, (c) Testudinata (especially observations on the west coasts of the British Isles), (d) Pisces, (e) Invertebrata; (5) plants; (6) other items. Contributions to this inquiry are earnestly requested from everyone in possession of useful information, and should be addressed to Dr. Å. Vedel Tåning, Charlottenlund Slot, Charlottenlund, Denmark, preferably during December of each year.

Science and Religion

FOR two hundred years, popular writers have attacked traditional religious beliefs in the name of science and pretty well undermined the faith of the plain man. Now, however, the sceptical attitude is turned against science itself, at a moment when, thanks to recent developments of physical theory, science appears vulnerable intellectually and, thanks to recent developments of military and political technique, still more vulnerable morally. Modern men, finding themselves with nothing to put their faith in, fill the spiritual vacuum with bogus religion based on bogus science, like Nazism and Communism. Even the more modest alternative, the assurance that all problems are technological and that the salvation of mankind depends on bigger and better gadgets, is not entirely satisfactory. The new quarterly magazine, *Science and Religion* (edited by Dr. Robert E. D. Clark, Paternoster Press, Ludgate House, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4. 1s. 6d. per copy), is intended, as the editor says, "to make science cultural; to show how science may strengthen religious belief instead of being allowed to develop independently and unconnected with our deepest needs". It is intended for the general public and particularly the young who learn something about science at school and are eager to know more. The articles in the first two numbers are excellently designed for their purpose. They are short, simply written and informative. Many of them are reviews of recent important books. The subjects include chemistry, biology, anthropology, psychology on the more purely scientific side, also historical and philosophical work. If the present standard can be maintained, the venture deserves to be a success.