

## Prof. Enzo Boeri

PROF. ENZO BOERI died on October 28, 1960, at the age of forty-six. He was associated with the Institute of Physiology of the University of Milan in various capacities from 1938 until 1955 and was appointed professor and chairman of the Department of Human Physiology of the Medical School, University of Ferrara, in 1955. In 1958 he also held the post of director of a group in the Biology Division of the Italian Nuclear Research Centre.

During the War his initial studies were on underwater physiology and he was active as a 'frogman'. His more important role was as a leader in the Resistance against the Nazis during 1944-45. He served bravely in great personal danger and under most difficult conditions: he was on one occasion saved from the firing squad by a two-hour margin. His radio contacts with the Allies were most valuable and were recognized by military decorations, including a Bronze Star from the United States.

Even though he had open to him a clear pathway to leadership in the post-war era, his love of science took him back to Naples and to the study of the vanadium compounds of *Phallusia mamillata*. During 1951-53 he undertook biochemical studies with Prof. H. Theorell at Stockholm. There he carried out experiments on the magnetic susceptibility of the vanadium compounds and studied enzymic properties of cytochrome *c* and catalase, particularly the reaction of the latter with thiol compounds. The next topic of research was cytochrome *b<sub>2</sub>*, the flavohæmoprotein prepared from yeast. He made an intensive study of the method of preparing this enzyme from the kinetic point of view. He made important contributions to the mechanism of its action, particularly the

stoichiometry of the lactate-flavin reaction and the function of the cytochrome portion in electron transfer from lactate to ferricyanide or cytochrome *c*. A portion of the latter work was carried out as an associate at the Johnson Research Foundation, University of Pennsylvania. Most recently he studied the properties of hæmerythrin.

Boeri's scientific work was characterized by high regard for precision, an open mind in the interpretation of his results and an understanding of the physiological importance of the biochemical data. He had soon established an international reputation as a physical biochemist. As a man, he was endowed with the rich gifts of his people. He was brave and unselfish, having a keen sense of fairness and a great interest in the problems of others. He was articulate—an irresistible conversationalist, and was forthright and often outspoken in his defence of what he believed right—in some cases in opposition to contemporary science in Italy. Therefore, he often embraced unpopular objectives and was a particularly strong crusader in the task of injecting new interests and life into an Italian science that he found to be resting too much on a glorious historical tradition.

He saw the urgent need for the re-introduction of experiments into the physiology course, in reviving the possibilities for foreigners and apostate priests to be eligible for professorial appointments in Italy and in providing adequate funds for the support of departmental chairmen and their research.

Prof. Boeri's example as a man and as a scientist serves as a landmark in his humble yet fearless dedication to high and worthy principles. His early passing leaves many goals unattained, but his ideas and his example clearly survive him.

BRITTON CHANCE

## NEWS and VIEWS

## Statistics in the University of London:

Prof. James Durbin

MR. JAMES DURBIN has been appointed to the University chair of statistics at the London School of Economics and Political Science, in succession to Prof. M. G. Kendall (see *Nature*, 190, 1060; 1961). Prof. Durbin read mathematics at St. John's College, Cambridge, and after a period of military service during the War with the Army Operational Research Group, returned to Cambridge, where he took the postgraduate diploma in mathematical statistics, with a special field of application in economics. After a short period with the British Boot, Shoe and Allied Trades Research Association and as a junior research officer in the Department of Applied Economics at Cambridge, he joined the staff of the London School of Economics in January 1950, being appointed a reader in 1953. Prof. Durbin has worked in both theoretical and applied statistics. His major contributions in the former cover time series analysis, regression analysis and social survey methodology. In the practical field he has made equally notable contributions to econometrics, social survey research and model building. He has also been closely associated with editorial work in the University of London, as a member of various committees of the Royal Statistical Society, as an associate editor of *Biometrika*, and as a Fellow of the International Statistical Institute. He has lectured in a number of

foreign centres, including Calcutta, Beirut, North Carolina, Stanford University, Uppsala and Copenhagen.

## Royal Society of Victoria Research Medal: Dr. George Baker

THE first award of the Research Medal of the Royal Society of Victoria has been made to Dr. George Baker of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization. The citation accompanying the award states that Dr. Baker "has published approximately a hundred original research papers on geological and mineralogical topics, including: (1) the geology of the Port Campbell coast; (2) phytoliths, the minute opaline bodies in plants; (3) the nature and origin of the small glassy meteorites called australites. Dr. Baker originated the theory of aerodynamic control of the shaping and sculpturing of the primary form of australites. Experiments by the American National Aeronautics and Space Administration have proved this theory correct. Australites throw light on the nature of re-entry phenomena of ballistic missiles, and indicate an excellent material for heat shields for manned spacecraft".

## Verco Medal of the Royal Society of South Australia: Dr. R. L. Specht

THE Verco Medal of the Royal Society of South Australia has been presented to Dr. R. L. Specht,