

still abound. Indeed, the 1967-68 expedition had to be provided with a commando of Ethiopian troops for protection. But now the crucial importance of the site has been revealed, palaeoanthropologists are hopeful that further expeditions will be mounted.

The Omo River was probably once the source of the Nile. Lake Rudolf abounds with Nilotic fish not found in comparable lakes, and the big bend in the Omo River where the fossils were discovered may well have been the site at which the Nile formerly joined the Omo. And the series of raised beaches which mark the various former levels of Lake Rudolf and the Omo during the ice age may well contain the fossil evidence that will fill many gaps in the hominid evolutionary record during most of the Pliocene.

ANTHROPOLOGY

Aleš Hrdlička Centenary

from a Correspondent

IN Czechoslovakia, the study of man past and present has a strong tradition. This is due very largely to the influence of one man, Aleš Hrdlička, the centenary of whose birth fell this year. It was celebrated by the Czechoslovak Anthropological Society of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences with a congress held from August 30 to September 5 in Humpolec, the town of his birth, and at this the civil authorities also paid full homage, with the unveiling of a memorial statue, the issue of a commemorative postage stamp and the opening of a new museum devoted to his work.

Hrdlička as a young man left Czechoslovakia for the United States where, after many years of study and research, he was appointed curator of the division of physical anthropology at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, a post created for him and which he held for forty years. He travelled widely, working much among American Indian peoples, in whose biology and origins he was particularly interested. He established the Hrdlička collection at the Smithsonian, founded the American Association of Physical Anthropologists and established its journal, both of which still flourish. During this time he lived frugally and, by no means a rich man, built up out of his savings the Hrdlička fund at the Smithsonian, to which many young scientists have reason to be grateful for the support granted from it for their researches. But he also sent considerable sums of money to Czechoslovakia, which made possible the founding and equipping of the Anthropological Institute of Charles University, Prague, and its Museum of Man. A bust of him now stands in the Smithsonian, and Czechs in Washington have recently on occasion decorated this with flowers, a place of national remembrance and pilgrimage.

To the celebrating congress came Czechs from almost all universities and institutes in the country, and, although representatives from a few countries were conspicuously absent, many came from other nations. The papers therefore covered a wide range of subjects, though all were pertinent to one of the four principal themes—normal human growth and development, adult morphology and its relation to sports training, growth and body form in disease and genetic and phenotypic differences among populations. J. L.

Angel (Smithsonian, Washington, DC) showed that thalassaemia probably existed in the Mediterranean area in the eighth millennium BC, as indicated by the occurrence of the pathological changes typical of this disease in skeletal material from the Frankchthi cave in Argolis. D. F. Roberts (University of Newcastle upon Tyne) showed that in Britain the secular trend to earlier development of children as measured by menarchal age in girls may have come to an end, whereas in Czechoslovakia the trend to greater stature at a given age in children is continuing (J. Suchy, Prague). E. Strouhal and F. H. Hussein (Prague and Bratislava) reported that inbreeding in Nubia exerts a depressant effect on the size of body characters such as stature and limb girth, and J. Parisková (Prague) described the appreciable effect of athletic training on body composition.

In retrospect, what emerged from most of the papers, no matter to what theme they contributed, was the demonstration of the plasticity of the human form in development. With this it was impossible to reconcile those few contributions, chiefly of a typological nature, which persisted in the assumption that human morphological features are constant no matter what the environment in which development occurs.

BIOMETEOROLOGY

Climate and the Body

from a Correspondent

THE fifth congress of the International Society for Biometeorology, held in Montreux between August 30 and September 1, illustrated the value of this society in allowing ideas to grow. It has long been clear that there is more to the biological effects of atmospheric ionization than the smelling of electricity by cranks. There is now much experimental evidence, and a lively new scientific discipline has emerged.

Some of the earliest evidence that habituation (a central nervous mechanism which inhibits sensations and responses) plays a part in acclimatization was presented twelve years ago. This is now generally accepted, and much additional evidence about it was presented at the congress this year, especially in the session dealing with the effects of cold on animals and man. A. J. F. Webster (University of Alberta) was able to separate aspects of cold adaptation that are, and are not, due to habituation.

Elsewhere at the congress, E. Sohar reported a plan by the Israel Institute of Technology for a fully air-conditioned underground city with an open air upper level, giving inhabitants the choice of moving about in a controlled environment (presumably on walkways or in electric cars) or of driving in the open (presumably in air-conditioned transport). During his presidential address, however, D. H. K. Lee (National Environmental Health Science Center, North Carolina) referred to the possibly adverse social effects due to environment, for example, excitement and rioting seem to be more common during long hot summers. But E. M. Glaser (Riker Laboratories, Welwyn Garden City) suggested that too much protection from variations of temperature might reduce the ability to cope with environmental extremes, which in turn could have adverse effects.

One of the advantages of this society is that it allows