Prof. N. I. Vavilov

PROF. N. I. VAVILOV, whose work is mentioned above, was a pupil of Bateson at the John Innes Horticultural Institution, London, in 1913 and 1914. Profiting by the unexampled opportunities afforded by the Soviet Government, he began in 1919 to study the natural variation of the ancestral species of cultivated plants. His special method was to use the geographical distribution of particular gene variations in determining the centre of their diversity, which he presumed to be the site of their origin. He applied this method to all the principal crop plants, leading expeditions to all parts of the world. This enabled him to infer the centres of origin of these plants. The most interesting example of this method concerns the wheats. The cultivated forms were already known to fall into two inter-sterile groups, the tetraploids like *T. durum*, *T. turgidum*, *T. polonicum*, and the hexaploids like *T. vulgare* and *T. compactum*. Vavilov found that the hexaploids had arisen from a Central Asiatic centre, while the tetraploids had arisen from an entirely different centre in North Africa, hence the association of the two groups of wheat with different lines of human cultural development.

THE precise value of Prof. Vavilov's methods and the importance of his "Law of Homologous Series in Variation", and his principles of regional selection, are only beginning to be appreciated, but his published work undoubtedly represents the most important systematic attempt to study natural variation in plants since De Candolle and Darwin. Since 1921, Vavilov has been director of the Institute of Plant Industry. Under his control, this organization has come to embrace stations distributed all over the Soviet Union. Vavilov has used his centralized authority to secure a co-ordination of genetics, cytology, physiology and taxonomy, in which more than two thousand trained workers are engaged in problems of the efficient utilization of plants in the national economy. The work of acclimatization and hybridization carried out by the Institute bears witness to the success of his work, a success which is due to the combination of an enlightened method of inquiry with an industry, enthusiasm and organizing capacity suited to the heavy responsibilities given him by the Soviet Government.

International Geological Congress, 1937

IN spite of the difficulties which the International Congress of Genetics appears to be meeting, Soviet geologists are busy preparing for the eighteenth International Geological Congress, of which the opening plenary meeting will be held in Moscow on July 21. The session will close on July 29. Excursions, both prior to and following the Congress, are being arranged for delegates and their families. Pre-Congress tours, beginning on July 1, include the following: (*A* 1) Karelia and the Kola Peninsula: Pre-Cambrian; igneous complexes; ore deposits; (*A* 2) Ukraine and Crimea: Pre-Cambrian; Donets Coal Basin; Crimean stratigraphy and tectonics; (*A* 3) Volga: stratigraphy of the East European U.S.S.R.; Caspian depression; salt domes; engineering problems; (*A* 4) Caucasus: stratigraphy; tectonics; igneous activity and ore deposits; (*A* 5) South Urals, Kazan and Donets Basin: stratigraphy and palæontology of the western slope of the Urals. The longer August excursions, the first two of which will occupy forty days, are as follows: (*C* 1) Urals, Caspian, Caucasus: the principal oil deposits of the U.S.S.R.; (*C* 2) Siberia: Caledonian, Variscan and Alpine tectonics; Palæozoic and Mesozoic stratigraphy and associated coal and iron deposits; (*C* 3) Novaya Zemblya: stratigraphy and tectonics; Caledonian granites and mineralization; (*C* 4) Urals: gabbro-peridotite and alkali complexes; mineral deposits of great variety. Full details and conditions of membership are given in the Third Circular, issued by the Organization Committee, copies of which may be obtained from the General Secretary, Moscow 17, Bolshaya Ordynka, 32. All arrangements for travelling, hotel accommodation, etc., are in the hands of Intourist, Ltd., Bush House, Aldwych, London, W.C.2.

Races in the British Isles

IT is generally considered more or less a fixed point in discussion of the racial history of the British Isles that a fundamental element in the population, which appears at least as early as the long barrow, is of Mediterranean origin. It will, therefore, come as a surprise to many to find that arguments subversive of this view have been put forward recently by Dr. G. B. Morant (*J. Roy. Anthrop. Inst.*, **66**, Pt. 1) in an analysis of the material upon which Dr. Cecil P. Martin based his study of the racial composition of the Irish people in "Prehistoric Man in Ireland" (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1935). Dr. Martin's conclusions pointed to a virtual identity of racial history in Ireland and Britain up to the intrusion of the Romans and Saxons in Britain. Ireland, however, on the whole was said to have a larger Iberian element and a smaller Nordic element than Britain. Dr. Morant, after a statistical analysis of the modern Irish material, has arrived at the conclusion that the modern Irish and the British Iron Age population are so similar that they might be samples from the same material, while the latter bear the same relation to the population of the Whitechapel plague pit of the seventeenth century. The Anglo-Saxon is slightly removed; but the modern English and the modern Irish might well be considered variants of one race.

ON this argument, it would, therefore, appear that the Iron Age population absorbed the Anglo-Saxon type. Further, this race, with which Dr. Morant would class the British Neolithic, on comparison with Continental types, emerges as essentially Nordic It is comparable with the prehistoric Scandinavian, the Reihengraber people, the Merovingians of northern France, and the Belgian Franks—all Nordics. Dr. Morant justifies the inclusion of the British Neolithic in this group on the evidence of stature and head-measurement, pointing out that