

## NEWS and VIEWS

### Scientific Societies and Post-War Problems

AFTER winning the War of 1914, the Allies lost the peace because of the inability of statesmen and public opinion to understand the dependence of national security on world order and the dependence of world order upon truly workable international relations. After the defeat of Nazism, the mistakes of the last twenty-two years must be avoided by the victorious nations. Hitler has a 'new order' for Europe which is apparently an old-fashioned Roman peace. Aside from the very general Atlantic Charter signed by President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill, no definite peace plans have been advanced by the Allies, although many groups both in and out of Government circles are working on aspects of the problem. The American Academy of Arts and Sciences is devoting its regular monthly meetings, November until May, to the subject of "Analysis of Post-War Problems and Procedures". The Academy, which has approximately eight hundred members elected from a wide variety of professional fields, includes men who are competent to give considered views on the natural and social sciences and in engineering and affairs; and the meetings are being held on the second Wednesday of the month at its Boston house under the chairmanship of Dr. Harlow Shapley, president of the Academy. On the Monday following, there is a forum directed by leaders chosen to discuss matters raised by the preceding Wednesday evening's speaker.

Prof. A. N. Whitehead, emeritus professor of philosophy at Harvard University, opened the series in November with a paper entitled, "Statesmanship and Specialized Learning"; Samuel Cross, J. Seelye Bixler and Hans Kelsen, also of Harvard, led the forum following this communication. The meeting on December 10 was concerned with problems of communication and transportation in a post-war world. Igor I. Sikorsky, engineering manager of United Aircraft Manufacturing Corporation, spoke "On the Air Transportation of the Future". Walter S. Lemmon, president of the World Wide Broadcasting Foundation, spoke on "Radio as a New Force in the Post-War World". The forum on December 15 was led by Douglas H. Schneider, programme manager of Station WRUL, and Joseph S. Newell, professor of aeronautical structural engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The January 14 meeting is being addressed by Zechariah Chafee, jun., Langdell professor of law at Harvard University, on the subject of "International Utopias". Among the topics for later meetings will be considerations of sources and availability of raw materials in a post-war world and discussions as to how the social sciences may best be utilized to implement the ideals of democracy.

### Aircraft Defence against Barrage Balloon Cables

PHOTOGRAPHS of German Heinkel III aircraft, shot down recently, reveal the fact that these machines are fitted with a balloon cable fender not very different from designs tried by both sides during the latter part of the War of 1914-18. It consists of a metal rail, V-shaped in plan form, attached to the wing tips with the point of the V carried on a pylon forward of the nose of the machine. Thus, when meeting a cable it is fended off by being slipped round the wing tip. The weight and drag of the

device is considerable, and has an appreciable effect upon the performance. British machines now use a row of small cable cutters along the leading edge of the wings. If the cable strikes between the cutters it slips along until it reaches the nearest one. This device is considered to be better, in that it releases the balloon, and clears the way for any following machines. The weight is less than that of the German fenders, although the comparative aerodynamic effects are not certain. The problem of ice formation on either type is likely to be serious, and in this case the British design, placing the cutters in the wing, which is probably already fitted with de-icing devices, is less likely to accumulate serious ice formations than the German exterior structure.

### Czech Medical Work in Britain

SHORTLY after the Czechoslovak Government was formed in London, a Department of Public Health was set up under its Ministry of Social Welfare to meet the needs of Czechs in Britain and to prepare for the onerous duties that await them on the liberation of their country. There are about 250 qualified Czech medical men and women in Great Britain. Many are serving with Czechoslovak army units, others are with the merchant navy and some (in co-operation with the Red Cross) are concerned with the welfare of their countrymen resident in Britain. There are clinics and wards in certain hospitals at their disposal and a Czechoslovak Medical Association in Great Britain has been formed to hold regular scientific meetings. Through the Czechoslovak Research Institute, it has just issued the first number of a *Bulletin* in English, to which Lord Horder has contributed the foreword. Lord Horder points out that medicine knows no racial distinctions and recognizes no geographical boundaries. Both nations (Czech and British) are allies and friends opposing the medievalism into which Nazi Germany would thrust all man's endeavours. The paralysis of the advance of medicine which war induces is one of the most serious effects of the crime committed by Germany against civilization, yet Czech medical men are keeping alight the flame of learning and of healing so that, when victory comes, medicine will shine again in the new home they will provide for her.

The *Bulletin* contains several informative articles on current Czech medical work. Before it was overrun by the Nazis, the country had an efficient and well-organized medical service with one practitioner to every 1,500 inhabitants. There were 548 hospitals with 90,000 beds, while all classes of the community could take advantage of the country's unique spa and sanatoria facilities. After the War ends, Czechoslovakia will be in urgent need of medical men, and it is important that Czech medical students now in Britain should complete their studies in readiness for future duties in the homeland, where there is no rising generation of doctors since the Nazis have closed all the medical and scientific faculties of the Universities of Prague and Brno.

### New Mexican Observatory

A NEW national observatory which will house a 24-30 in. Schmidt photographic telescope, claimed to be the most powerful in the tropics, is being built in Mexico. Other equipment will include a 12-in. reflector for visual observations and two or three cameras of the Ross type with apertures of 3-5 inches.