SCIENCE IN THE U.S.S.R.

SOVIET BIOLOGY

By Dr. L. C. DUNN
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

At the time of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution in 1927, I was in Moscow; I awakened each morning in the little glass-sided cupola on top of the palatial and elegant mansion which had now become the Institute of Experimental Biology. My first impression was one of familiarity, of at-homeness, for this was a genetics laboratory, filled with the sights and smells associated with the little fly, Drosophila, which breeds in its thousands in the milk bottles of fermenting food which line all the genetics laboratories in the world. But in the farther distance, through the windows, were the spires of Moscow, and these and the physical world they represented were utterly strange and new to me.

This alternation of strangeness and familiarity must have struck many American visitors to Russia, and it persists when we try to examine the scientific achievements of the Soviet Union or indeed of any country not our own. For any modern science is in some sense the same wherever we find it, a part of one interconnected whole resting on common basic principles, with a common past and a common future, and it is artificial and deceptive to try to break it into separate national entities. And yet, just as the history of science consists in part of the achievements of individuals, so also it rests on the contributions of groups of persons with common purposes and common methods, and oftentimes the character of these groups is determined by the physical, economic and social milieu. It was unquestionable that the society behind Soviet biology was very different from that found in Europe and America, and this, together with the temperament, traditions and outlook of the Soviet scien-
Science 99 (2561), 65-86.