

lator as conscientious as she is accomplished; the book reads consistently like English and like sense, a notable achievement. C.H.

POLAND, RUSSIA AND GREAT BRITAIN, 1941-45. By R. Umiastowski. (Hollis and Carter; 25s.)

This important book, the best which has yet appeared on the subject, deals with the development of the Anglo-Polish Alliance, the failure to integrate that alliance with the subsequent Anglo-American-Russian alliance, and the events which led, as a result of that failure, to the latest partition of Poland. It is heavily documented and is well provided with maps. Avowedly written from the Polish point of view, it nevertheless aims at giving a factual and objective account of the business, and it is a book which will be necessary for anybody who wishes to understand the latest development of the Polish problem. It is a book which should certainly find a place in any good library.

The principal weakness of the volume is that the author, determined to give chapter and verse and to let the documents speak whenever possible for themselves, has not provided his readers with a book which, at any rate in the earlier chapters, is easy to read. He has also been badly served in matters of translation and proof-reading. To give one astonishing example, the first chapter is headed 'Danaos' Gift'. The Virgilian quotation which appears below elucidates the problem: 'timeo Danaos et dona ferentes'.

Nevertheless the book well repays reading, and after a chapter or two the march of events takes charge of the reader and carries him forward to the conclusion. It is important that English readers should have at their disposal a book of this type, for the importance of the subject is not confined merely to those who take an interest in Polish affairs. To read this book, slowly and with thought, is to gain a close and detailed view of modern political technique. It is an unpleasant sight but it is essential if we are to understand the world in which we are now living.

There is however another and a less obvious reason why this book should be carefully read. During the war only a few in England had either the time or the knowledge to follow at all closely the manœuvres and negotiations which led up to the final tragedy of Poland. Indeed it is only during the last few months that any appreciable body of opinion has become to any extent acquainted with the facts. What little journalistic commentary or explanation there was during the war years was of a most extraordinary kind, and this book may help to put its readers on their guard against taking their political facts and views on foreign countries straight from the journalism of the day without checking it all against the background of history.

The truth is that the dispute between Russia and Poland was never discussed: instead one solution, that of the surrender of the Poles to the Russians, was discussed. As Professor Trevelyan has remarked, 'disinterested intellectual curiosity is the life-blood of civilisation',

and this 'disinterested intellectual curiosity' was never allowed full play. Instead the whole business was presented as a troublesome squabble about whether the Pripet Marshes were inhabited by Poles or Russians. The Poles, we were told, were, like the Cavaliers in 1666 and all *That*, 'rong but wromantic'. That unimpeachable Conservative, Lord Curzon, had provided the Poles with a satisfactory frontier after the last war; and all that was needed was that they should return to this frontier. The few who consulted the official life of Lord Curzon were presumably surprised to find no mention of this stroke of statesmanship in the book. Rumours of deportations to Siberia were, it was felt, adequately answered when the editor of England's most enlightened weekly explained that the deportees were only decadent aristocrats who were being taken to Asiatic Russia to learn how the poor really lived.

It is possible to differ widely as to where the western frontier of Russia should be; it is possible to argue that Polish diplomacy has not always been entirely admirable. On the other hand, what is impossible to maintain is that the destruction of Poland which took place at the end of the 18th century was anything other than the disgraceful affair which Europe has always considered it to be. H. A. L. Fisher described it as 'one of the most shameful episodes in the annals of Europe'. Nearly a century earlier, in 1842, Macaulay had written of it as 'that great crime, the fruitful parent of other great crimes'. Talleyrand, who had witnessed the business, described the Partition of Poland as Europe's 'mortal sin', and on the subject of mortal sin Talleyrand's opinion may not unfairly be described as that of an expert, almost, one might say, that of a connoisseur. Yet the territorial decision which was reached at Yalta involved handing over to Russia everything which she had gained in the three historic partitions of Poland, together with approximately half Austria's share into the bargain. The verdict of history was reversed and what had been Europe's 'mortal sin' was converted overnight into an act of niggardly and insufficient justice to Imperial Russia.

But it is not merely a question of political morality. As long ago as the 16th century Melanchthon had pointed out that Germany and the Empire could not be invaded 'nisi per Poloniam'. Sir Halford Mackinder had emphasised in the nineteen-twenties that to control Eastern Europe brought the control of the world within measurable distance. For this reason, if for no other, the Polish Question must continue to be of essential importance in world politics. The end is not yet, and the wise man will therefore take care to read M. UmiaŃkowski's book.

T. CHARLES EDWARDS.

THE ATOM AND THE WAY. By Maurice Browne. (Gollancz; 3s. 6d.)

Here is a man who realises more poignantly than the crowd that the atomic age has begun; whose pamphlet is an honourable attempt to wrestle with the age's problem: What can survive and how? Mr Maurice Browne answers in terms of his own religious experience.